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The Week

THE most cheering news of Congress in a long time is the revolt against the sales tax, which so astonished and alarmed the leaders in the House last week. In part, of course, it was inspired by self-interest of important mercantile groups; but in the main it was a genuine revolt against a bad principle. The proponents of the tax have sought to quiet the opposition by making important concessions which would exempt agricultural implements, food, clothing, medical supplies and other special items. All told, these would reduce the estimated revenue from the tax by $144,000,000 out of a total estimated return of $595,000,000. We earnestly hope that those who have been leading the fight will not accept this compromise. It leaves the vicious principle of the tax untouched; it would still impose a burden of more than $400,000,000 annually on those elements in the community which can least afford to pay; and once the sales tax is enacted, it would be all too easy to whittle away the exemptions.

AGAINST the substitute proposal to raise the income-tax rates in the higher brackets, the old argument is trotted out that if this were done, the rich would escape the levy by putting their money into tax-exempt government bonds. The argument has two strings to its bow: first, that the purpose of the tax would be checkmated; second, that the investment resources of the country would be diverted from productive industry to "non-productive" governmental expenses. There is some strength in the first contention, but not much. The chief investors in government bonds will remain, as before, not rich individuals but banks, insurance companies and trusteed funds, where safety rather than yield is the prime consideration. During prosperity, even with high income rates in force, by far the greater part of the incomes of the rich came from dividends and capital gains rather than from tax-exempt securities. The reverse may prove to be true in depression, but it will cease being true the moment more money is to be made in other investments than government bonds. The second argument is 100-percent fallacious. Somebody buys all the government bonds that are issued in any case; so far as the supply of money for industrial expansion is concerned, it makes no difference whether the purchasers of tax-exempts are rich investors or less rich investors. Furthermore, money spent by governments is not necessarily "non-productive." It is certainly infinitely more productive than money which is hoarded and hence not spent at all.

IT IS extraordinary that with all the debate over the sales tax, so little has been said about the experience of Canada, which is in general comparable with what our own would be if we adopted the measure. So far as we are aware, the only important attempt to look at the Canadian experiment has been that of William Randolph Hearst, who took a number of American Congressmen across the border at his own expense to show them the brightest possible picture of the sales tax in operation. Mr. Hearst is of course a man of great wealth and, in recent years, of strong and increasing conservatism. Naturally, he favors a tax which bears upon the poor rather than one which would take an enlarged share of his own accumulated property. A very different picture of the Canadian situation is presented by Thomas Moore, president of the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress, interviewed a few days ago by the Scripps-Howard

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It has added much to the cost of living of the lowest paid worker and his family.

It is confusing and costly in administration.

The accumulation of profits charged on the sales tax is many times the amount of the tax before the articles actually reach the hands of the consumer.

The tax restricts purchasing power and thereby helps to continue the depression.

Mr. Moore, through his official position, ought to know what he is talking about. We should be glad to know whether Mr. Hearst, as the principal American proponent of the sales tax, has any answer to these charges.

JUSTICE Holmes is gone from the Supreme Court, but Justice Brandeis remains. His dissenting opinion in the case of the New State Ice Company vs. Ernest A. Liebman is a notable addition to his long list of similar documents. Declaring that we are faced by an emergency more serious than war, Mr. Brandeis laid the responsibility at the door of unbalanced production and consumption, and quoted with seeming approval the belief of "many thoughtful men" that investment in productive enterprise must be subjected to control, and unbridled competition brought to an end. While fully recognizing the difficulties of a planned national economy, he declared his faith in the ability of mankind, by experimentation, "to remold our economic practices and institutions to meet changing social and economic needs." Such experimentation, he declared, is a legitimate function of the individual states, and the Supreme Court ought not to hamper these activities. "We should ever be on guard, lest we would erect our prejudices into legal principles. If we would guide by the light of reason, we must let our minds be bold."

IT WOULD be well if the majority of the Court, who disagreed with Justices Brandeis and Stone in the Oklahoma ice case, would read with attention, and ponder upon, the recent letter from President Erskine to the stockholders of the Studebaker Corporation. Mr. Erskine, arguing for a writing-down of the value of the common stock and the plant account of the company, points out that the automobile industry has plants capable of producing 9,000,000 cars annually, though it can now sell only 2,000,000. Do the learned Justices approve the social and economic effects of using the labor energy and resources of the country in order to prepare to produce over four times as many cars as can be sold? Perhaps they think there is a potential need for 9,000,000 new cars a year; but in that case, how do they expect the people to be given enough purchasing power to buy them? Do they maintain that this result can be achieved under capitalistic competition? What is the use of competition to reduce prices in the interest of the consumer, if the consumer cannot buy at any price? The Oklahoma licensing law is our governments are to be denied the right of dealing with it at all? What is the use of holding intact the so-called rights of individualistic private property if the result of doing so is what we now see on every hand? The right protected is little more than the right to act like an anarchist in a necessarily interdependent world.

AT THE moment, the news from the Far East is more cheerful than it has been in many weeks—though it is of course entirely possible that before these words are read, the temperature may have dropped again. The Chinese and Japanese forces at Shanghai have officially accepted the terms of a truce which, however, has not at the moment of writing been ratified by Nanking or Tokio. The truce provides that the Chinese forces shall stay where they are, and the Japanese "shall withdraw." Presumably, this means the return of most of the Japanese soldiers to their own country, although the dispatches do not make this clear. The League of Nations investigating committee has arrived at Shanghai, and while the truce was being negotiated its members were engaged in the thoroughly useless task of examining the destruction caused by the recent battles. In Japan, the danger of a military dictatorship on fascist lines is now reported to have been exaggerated, and the prediction is made that the present unsatisfactory political conditions will be resolved by a coalition government of the Ramsay MacDonald type, which will include representatives of both the Seiyukai and Minseito parties. Even in regard to the most serious ultimate problem in the Far East, the possible war between Japan and Soviet Russia, the news of the moment is somewhat more reassuring. The Japanese government has officially notified Moscow that its actions are not intended to be inimical to Russian interests. It has offered to suppress the White Russians in Manchuria, and while it admits a considerable massing of Japanese troops along the Korean border, it insists that these troops are not to be used against the U.S.S.R. Despite all these fine words, of course, the fundamental conflict remains unabated, though Japan's humiliating check at Shanghai, the difficulties she is encountering in Manchuria and her grave internal situation have perhaps operated to postpone the danger of conflict.

TWO developments occurred last week in regard to trade between Soviet Russia and the United States, one favorable and the other hostile. Of the two, the favorable one was much more important. Sitting in the United States Customs Court in New York, Judge Charles P. McClelland ruled that "dumping" duties of more than $1,000,000 need not be paid on matches made in Russia and sold in America. The government contended that these matches had been "dumped" here without reference

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McClelland held that when the matches were made, they had no "foreign market or export value." He added that it was impossible for him to ascertain what Congress meant by the words "fair value" in the Tariff Act, and excoriated the government for its handling of the case which, he said, seemed to be designed to conceal, rather than elucidate, the important facts. This case will be appealed to the full court of three judges, and if they sustain Judge McClelland, it will go to the United States Court of Customs and Tax Appeals at Washington. In the meantime, Judge McClelland's decision comes as a breath of common sense in regard to a subject which is usually the occasion for hysterical nonsense.

THE other development of the week was a renewed attempt to put a complete embargo on the importation of merchandise from the U.S.S.R. A delegation of ten Senators, twenty-six Representatives and numerous private citizens called upon Mr. Mills, Secretary of the Treasury, to demand that no more goods be permitted to come from Russia, on the ground that all production there is under conditions of "forced labor." Mr. Mills replied that he had no power to do this, and that if Congress wanted Russian trade shut off, it should pass new laws to that effect. We are glad to say that the prospect of this is not serious. While there is a large and powerful lobby composed of Americans who make goods which suffer from Russian competition, there is another American group which buys manganese, pulpwood, lumber, matches, etc. from the U.S.S.R. very much cheaper than it can obtain these things anywhere else. To be sure, the existing regulations, which make every shipload of Soviet goods subject to possible seizure and a long court action, are a grave handicap to trade. An even graver handicap is Russia's development of her own cotton industry, and her determination to swing as much of her trade as possible to countries like England and Germany, which welcome and assist her business. In the long run, she will have no more dealings with America than she can possibly avoid. In the meantime, and in the midst of the appalling paralysis of American trade in general, it is our guess that the government will do nothing more at present to make a bad matter worse.

THE victory of de Valera in Ireland has brought forward three immediate problems. The first is the oath of allegiance to the King, the second is the possible repudiation of annuities paid by Ireland into the British Exchequer, and the third is the problem of Ulster. Of the three, the last is by all odds the most serious. Great Britain long ago recognized, in the Statute of Westminster, that if any of the dominions wants complete independence, there is now no way of preventing it; and the same thing applies, in essence, to Ireland. De Valera must either be permitted to abolish the oath of allegiance, or else the British must send an [illegible] cially, she dare not do it in view of the situation in Egypt and India, and her own public opinion and that of the world would condemn such an action. As for the annuities, the same situation holds good. They are as uncollectable as war debts, if Ireland chooses not to pay. The problem of Ulster is an extremely difficult one, but there is no need for complete pessimism about it. The Ulsterites, realizing how little assistance the British can now give them, will be inclined to be reasonable; and the Irish government will undoubtedly be more sober and conciliatory than anyone would have believed possible a decade ago. In the long run, it is undoubtedly best that Northern and Southern Ireland should work out their relationship without interference from any outsider. Only in that way can a permanent solution be attained.

SENATOR Bingham of Connecticut, who used to be a college professor and had some pretensions as a scientist, has become a thoroughgoing politician, as is evidenced by his shocking behavior last week. A measure is before Congress providing $132,000,000 for road building, largely as relief to the unemployed. Senator Bingham, who opposes this bill, sent telegrams to all the Governors, asking them whether there was any starvation in their states; and when thirty-nine of the forty who replied said that there was none, Senator Bingham triumphantly adduced these telegrams as evidence that the bill need not be passed. The exception was Governor Pinchot of Pennsylvania, who said that "we know starvation is widespread," and estimated that there are a million unemployed in his state alone. In commenting on the Bingham questionnaire, first of all it should be observed that the matter of actual starvation has little bearing on the merits of the bill. There are millions of unemployed today who, while they still somehow find food for themselves, are nearing the end of their resources and are desperately in need of assistance. In the second place, if Senator Bingham knows anything, he must know that starvation practically never appears in a form to get itself recorded in vital statistics. People don't starve; they die of something else, because of the weakness induced by undernourishment.

AGAIN, the Senator might have had the sense to realize that his inquiry was a challenge to the local pride of every Governor who received it, and that each of these men would naturally put the best face upon things in replying. Finally, he should have been aware of the fact which is well known to all the experts in this field: that most of the Governors probably wouldn't know of starvation conditions, even if they existed. They are politicians, with the easy optimism, the ignorance and mental laziness which are characteristic of the tribe. It would be a miracle if many of them possessed the

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Senator Bingham's reliance upon the Governors is all the more inexcusable because only a few weeks earlier, a large group of social workers and directors of welfare agencies throughout the United States came to Washington and testified in the hearings on the La Follette-Costigan bill. Their testimony, which was widely published at the time, showed such serious conditions in several parts of the country that they were practically unanimous in declaring that federal relief is essential. But such testimony as theirs evidently makes no impression on men of Bingham's stripe.

IN THE struggle to balance the budget, the economy axe is being swung in various directions in Washington and chiefly against those government departments which are without important political influence. Among these, unhappily, is one of the most useful of all federal agencies, the Children's Bureau in the Department of Labor. Congress now proposes to reduce its annual appropriation by $100,000. This is a 25-percent cut, which would necessitate dismissing about one-third of the permanent staff and drastically curtailing all activities. As many of our readers know, the Children's Bureau investigates, and seeks to mitigate, infant and maternal mortality; it fights the employment of children in dangerous occupations, does important work in the field of juvenile delinquency, and cooperates with state and county welfare agencies throughout the nation. It is also working among juvenile prisoners of the federal government, whose plight was discussed in The New Republic of March 16 ("Uncle Sam and the Juvenile Delinquent"). It has often been said in Washington that the Hoover administration is antagonistic to the Children's Bureau, and would like to see its activities transferred to other government departments, or abolished. There is all the more reason, therefore, for scrutinizing closely proposals for reduced appropriations.

THE activities of scientific laboratories must now and then prove slightly annoying to members of the advertising "profession," intent upon selling the wares of their clients, the manufacturers, to the public by whatever means prove effective. Only a few days ago, such a laboratory announced after careful investigation that "magnetic sharpeners" for razor blades are absolutely without effect upon the blades they are supposed to sharpen. Now comes an experiment conducted in a dental laboratory in South Bend, Indiana, which punctures the advertising claim of a well known toothpaste that it makes your teeth "three shades lighter in three days." As reported in Science Service, seventy-three patients were included in the test. The color of the teeth of each was carefully checked against a standard dental color chart, and then each was given some of the advertised toothpaste with instructions to use it faithfully according to the direc- the teeth of the seventy-three martyrs to science were again examined. Seventy-two of them showed absolutely no change in coloration; but the teeth of the seventy-third seemed to be minutely lighter, and to give the advertised product the benefit of the doubt they were reported "one shade lighter." Chemical analysis shows that this toothpaste is unobjectionable in composition; but because of the absurd claim made in its advertising, it is not included in the list of "accepted dental remedies" of the American Dental Association.

THE prize for the silliest nonsense uttered thus far in 1932 undoubtedly goes to Mr. Frank J. Loesch and Mr. Robert Isham Randolph, two conspicuous leaders in Chicago's fight against crime. As our readers know, President Hoover has nominated Federal Judge James H. Wilkerson to the United States Court of Appeals, an extremely important post. Much opposition to the nomination has developed, inside the Senate and out of it. Messrs. Loesch and Randolph are in favor of the proposal, and they have advanced the astonishing suggestion that the opposition to it comes primarily from gangland. Judge Wilkerson, it will be remembered, has sentenced Al Capone and other gangsters to prison on various federal charges when the local authorities in Chicago had shown themselves incapable of dealing with them; and the Loesch-Randolph argument is that the gangsters, in revenge, are seeking to prevent Judge Wilkerson's elevation. But common sense ought to tell us that if the gangsters were interested in the matter one way or the other, they would favor having Judge Wilkerson sent to a court where he could no longer do them any damage. The opposition to him comes from perfectly respectable sources, and is based upon his record as a judge. As our readers know, he issued the notorious injunction in the shopmen's strike in 1922. He issued similar injunctions against electrical workers and musicians in 1924 and 1928. Grave doubts are raised by his conduct in the St. Paul reorganization. These various matters give a fair sample of his attitude and temper. Even the sentences imposed upon Capone and others, which Loesch and Randolph admire, reflect small credit upon Wilkerson's judicial philosophy, since he punished men with outrageous severity for one crime, on the theory that they had been guilty of others for which they had never been tried.

JUDSON KING, director of the National Popular Government League, has issued a striking statement discussing the leading presidential candidates of both parties on a basis of their attitude on the power question. His report is published with the endorsement of fifteen members of the United States Senate and twenty-two Representatives, who declare that in their judgment the power question is "one of the most important issues before the

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King has ingeniously broken up "the power question" into a number of parts, and gives the attitude of all the candidates in each case. Thus he finds President Hoover favors the private interests six times, the public interest once and is silent or noncommittal once. Speaker Garner favors the public twice and is silent or noncommittal six times; and so on. In his summary, Mr. King puts Governor Roosevelt at the top of the list of six candidates in regard to this subject. Of President Hoover he says that he would remain "a power-trust President." The same description applies to Newton D. Baker and to Governor Ritchie. Of former Governor Smith he says that his record in office was mixed, and has become more so since 1928, "making it difficult to forecast future action." An estimate of Garner's position is almost impossible because "he has agreed with members of the House to express no views while Speaker of the House upon controverted questions." Mr. King's survey brings out nothing that is startlingly new, but in view of the importance of the subject, it is a useful enterprise and one which deserves to be remembered.

IT IS interesting to note that, according to all indications, the provisions of the Glass-Steagall act have not yet been utilized at all. Apparently no banks or groups of banks have obtained loans under its more liberal provisions, nor have government bonds been used as collateral for the issuance of currency. So far as these provisions are concerned, its sole effect has not been actual enlargement of the credit base, but only a possible stimulant to confidence. In one respect only has the bill produced a tangible change. The Federal Reserve banks, knowing that they need no longer fear any diminution of the supply of "free gold" by foreign withdrawals, have evidently indulged more freely in the purchase of government securities. This action, if it were on a large enough scale, would help to sustain the bond market and would release credit for any existing requirements. At present, however, it has not gone far. Between the enactment of the measure and March 16, the Reserve banks had expanded their holdings of United States securities from $741,000,000 to $810,000,000, or by $69,000,000. It would take an expansion of at least $500,000,000 in these holdings for any real test of the theory of wholesome inflation as a result of central bank policy.

THOUGH the American Legion has been carrying on a widely publicized campaign on behalf of the unemployed, it would seem that certain members of the organization are far more interested in jamming 100-percent Americanism down the throats of the jobless than in finding them work. At least, such has been the experience in Danville, Illinois, where two lawyers, sent there by the International Labor Defense and the American Civil Liberties Union to defend fifteen men who had been arrested for holding an unemployment meeting, were kidnaped and run out of town. After the trial, when the two lawyers, Albert Goldman and Joseph B. Lofton of Chicago, had succeeded in getting the men off with a small fine, they were greeted on the steps of the courthouse by a crowd of Legionnaires. They were taken to the Legion headquarters, where their papers were examined, then bundled into a car. After one of them was beaten by Legion members, in the presence, it is said, of a Danville policeman, they were driven to the town limits and told to leave. Were this the first example of intimidation and violence toward lawyers performing their duty, the episode might be ignored, but recently the practice has become alarmingly prevalent.

ONE of the special disadvantages faced by young American composers is that they rarely have a chance to hear their music played. The country has several symphony orchestras of the first rank, led by famous conductors and performing habitually before audiences that crowd a vast auditorium; but this is hardly the atmosphere in which a young composer of talent, working toward new forms of expression, is displayed to the best advantage. He requires a smaller and more responsive audience, a wider opportunity for having his work performed. As a step toward providing this audience and this opportunity, the Corporation of Yaddo is holding a Festival of Contemporary American Music at Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, New York, from April 29 until May 4. Three concerts devoted to chamber music will open the festival. Later there will be a series of informal conferences among the composers present, who will include George Antheil, Aaron Copland, Marc Blitztein, Carl McKinley and Vergil Thomson. One special conference will be held between critics and composers for the furtherance of mutual understanding (guns, we suppose, will be checked at the door). The sponsors hope that the Festival will become an annual event, an occasion on which not only chamber music, but other compositions as well, can be performed before a chosen audience.

Prospects of Japanese Fascism

RUMOR from the Far East brings frequent reports that a drastic change of government in Japan is foreshadowed. There is a powerful group, it appears, which believes that parliamentarism has failed, and that Japan has made a mistake in attempting to copy Western civilization. They want a return to oriental traditions; they want Japan to withdraw from the League of Nations and seek her own destiny as a self-sufficient unit. The new governmental set-up would be in the nature of an autocracy, depending heavily upon

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the military. It is described by some as fascism, by others as a sort of military communism. In any event it would attempt to revive the feudal traditions which were strongly alive in Japan long after they lost their hold in modern Europe. Though the people in general would be deprived of their existing political rights, an attempt would be made to stabilize the economic and social status of the several classes, and to guarantee jobs and security, while limiting the privileges of the rulers.

Anyone who looks with unprejudiced eyes at the civilization which has resulted in the Occident from the combination of economic liberalism and modern industry could hardly blame the Japanese for not wanting to copy it further. The spectacle presented by Europe and the United States in the past ten or fifteen years is hardly one to reassure the Japanese that they did wisely in abandoning their ancient traditions, opening their gates to Western influences and attempting to imitate what the rest of us had done. Now that Japan finds herself opposed by the Occident in her military adventure, it would be only natural for the opponents of Western civilization to gain in prestige and power. A world which is in such straits that it can neither manage its own affairs nor enforce the opposition which its governments proclaim toward Japan's present activities is not one to which liberal Japanese can point as a shining example.

In the meantime, however, Japan has given hostages to the new way of life which would prove embarrassing in any attempt to cut off her contacts with the outside world. She has built up industry which depends on international trade, and upon this trade and industry in turn depends the livelihood of millions of Japanese. Almost as much as England, Japan must sell abroad her native resources, and must import and manufacture for export certain other raw materials. In her case the chief native resource is silk instead of coal, but she is like Great Britain in having a large cotton-textile industry which must seek its supplies and its markets, to a large extent, outside the country. She also has a variety of light industry with an export market. While the present population could, at a pinch, be fed without foreign commerce, it could have only a bare margin of existence above food and shelter. And the population is growing so rapidly that even the food supply will soon be inadequate, in a country where all tillable land is already under cultivation.

The movement for national self-sufficiency is not altogether a sentimental one, and it was in existence before the present crisis arose. For years the government has adopted a policy of fostering native industries which could not have survived foreign competition, by subsidy, tariff and even governmental participation. Those who profit from these industries, like those persons in any other country who have come to depend on protection, naturally form a strong nucleus of economic in-

A policy of protection and subsidy naturally interferes with foreign trade. It puts the exporting industries at a disadvantage by raising their costs, it increases taxes and, in its extreme forms, it is likely to cause fiscal difficulties which upset things like the gold standard and exchange stability. Much of the political controversy in Japan has been between the interests dependent on foreign trade and those dependent on the sheltered industries. It so happens that the sheltered industries, like iron and steel and chemicals, are the very ones upon which the army and navy must rely mainly for equipment and supplies. There is therefore a natural alliance between the exclusive nationalists in both military and economic circles.

The commercial forces which were in control before the Manchurian adventure began had embarked on a course of governmental retrenchment, deflation and sound money, with the idea that this would facilitate the growth of foreign commerce. That would be in their own interest, but they were also convinced that it was the only way of economic salvation for the country. Their policy was of course temporarily painful, and it became all the more so because of the depression. Popular dissatisfaction naturally gave the military nationalists their chance. But these forces must be perfectly well aware that a structure of national self-sufficiency cannot be based on the Japanese islands alone, with their lack of essential raw materials and their overflowing population. If Japan were to guarantee an acceptable standard of life for her people on a basis of protection of the less efficient industries, high governmental costs and consequent inability to compete on even terms in international markets, she must have political control of an empire embracing enough iron, coal and other mineral deposits and enough agricultural areas. Russia may some day be self-contained; the United States could be almost self-contained; but not an island, trading nation.

Japanese imperialism therefore has, in spite of any emotional rationalization in which it may be veiled, much the same material basis as economic imperialism anywhere. In spite of the pretensions which it may set forth about a return to oriental tradition, it is really an imitation of one of the worst traditions of the capitalistic West. Japan, with a population of a size made possible only by the growth of machine technique, is caught in the implications of capitalist industrialism just as firmly as any other nation. It must choose between international coöperation and trade, and a controlled self-sufficiency. And, in this case, any attempt to achieve self-sufficiency necessitates conquest and rulership of foreign territory.

An industrial feudalism is conceivable, provided the population on which it depends consents to it indefinitely. But when the building of an isolated feudalism requires the exploitation of vast conquered territories inhabited by alien peoples, it is

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must lead Japan to reject Western liberalism in her economic and political life, she can make an eventual success of the endeavor only by combining on equal terms with the population of the other territories which are needed for a complete economic unit. And such a combination is inconceivable under an imperialistic and aggressive government based on special privilege for the rulers of one nation alone. It might be possible under an international communist federation, but it certainly is impossible under a nationalistic Japanese autocracy.

If, therefore, Japan should in the next few years turn toward her own brand of military fascism, this revolution would not long endure. Its results would be intolerable to the subject peoples, and it could not achieve what it promised to the Japanese themselves. By the time its failure had become apparent, if Western capitalism had not reëstablished itself as a desirable system of social and economic organization, there would be only one direction in which the Far Eastern peoples could turn. They could still take as an example the methods of Soviet Russia.

Liberia: the Black Man's Burden

FOR SOME years, the world has been hearing from time to time about slavery in Liberia, the black republic set up on the west coast of Africa many years ago as a home for freed Negroes from the United States. The memory of their fathers' servitude across the ocean means less to the Liberians than does the example set by Europeans who control nearby territory, for the 15,000 Afro-Americans who dominate the republic treat the two million aboriginal inhabitants with all the cruelty which has been exhibited by white men against the natives anywhere else in the Dark Continent. The details have been printed a number of times and need not be repeated here, except to say that labor is forced from the tribesmen by threat of violence or, if necessary, by actual torture; and that the conditions of slavery under which they live are so appalling that large numbers of them do their captors the disservice of dying after a few months.

This situation has received attention both from the United States and from the League of Nations. A former president of Liberia was forced out of office about two years ago, indirectly through American influence, because of the conditions which had been revealed. The League Commission investigated the situation thoroughly and made a report fully sustaining the charges. If the pressure of worldwide public opinion were as effective as some optimistic souls like to think, Liberian slavery should have been at an end some time ago. Unfortunately, world public opinion seems to have had not the slightest effect. The most recent news from Liberia is that government officials have been visit-

wreaking reprisals upon those individuals who were reckless enough to give testimony before the League of Nations Commission. In some cases entire villages were burned to the ground. As for the forced labor, it goes on very much as before. It is generally agreed by the experts that Liberia needs a house cleaning. A new regime of white men is suggested, and there is talk of a loan to the government to put it on its feet. The Firestone Rubber Company, which has an enormous concession for plantations, has a contract forbidding any loans from other sources for a long period of years, but is said to be willing to waive its rights in view of the desperate condition of the country. Perhaps the worst obstacle to carrying out this proposal is yellow fever, which is so serious a menace to white men in Liberia that it is almost impossible for them to live there.

The American, British and French governments have all sent stiff notes to Liberia within the past few days; but these notes, it is safe to say, will be disregarded. Indeed, the ordinary agencies by which pressure is usually brought to bear upon a recalcitrant minor power can be employed only with great difficulty, or not at all, in this case. The Afro-American ruling clique first denies that anything is wrong, then promises reformation, and as soon as the white investigators go away, proceeds to carry on as usual, merely pausing to torture or kill those who have testified to past cruelties. Probably in the long run, a League of Nations mandate or its equivalent will provide the only solution. A mandate of this sort would prevent such a dubious liaison as now exists between the Liberian government and the Firestone Rubber Company. Before such a mandate could be put into effect, however, a terribly difficult piece of sanitary engineering would need to be done, to control the yellow fever so that white men can live in the country with reasonable safety. This is a long and slow job; and in the meantime, we have the melancholy spectacle of an insignificant equatorial country, with no national defense—unless its climate can be so described—thumbing its nose at the unanimous demands of all the Great Powers of the world.

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Reshearing the Shorn Lambs

The Plight of the Holders of Defaulted Real Estate Bonds

EVEN real-estate bond houses have been forced to acknowledge the crumbling of their own financial structure. Needless to say, one could never extract from them the admission that of the ten billion dollars of securities sold to the public, six billions are in default—nor an admission of the basic insecurity of their so-called "sterling" securities, but it takes only casual observation to know that defaults on real-estate bond issues follow each other with such rapidity that they tread on one another's heels. The casualties throughout the country in the past sixty days are enormous; in New York City alone the following outstanding ventures have become hopelessly involved, their so-called mortgage bonds selling at only a fraction of the original price of the issue:

	Amount of Issue	Current Price
Ambassador Hotels (Eastern)	$9,000,000	7
Hotel Pierre	6,500,000	3½
London Terrace	7,000,000	21
Madison Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street	4,000,000	6½
Majestic Apartments	9,000,000	13½
Oliver Cromwell	1,800,000	5½
1 West Fifty-seventh Street	3,000,000	10
Squibb Building	4,500,000	12½

The prices on these issues are quoted to me by S. W. Straus and Company, which house has, during the past few months, opened a trading department for the purpose of repurchasing these bonds, originally issued by themselves at par.

Despite staggering losses, no provision has been made by law nor has any board of inquiry been created to look into methods for safeguarding the reorganization of these properties. In every case, because of the entrenched position of the original house of issue and governmental inaction, reorganizations have been kept under the aegis of the issuing bankers with such regard for the bond holders' equity as may be surmised from my article in the September 30, 1931, issue of this journal. From their original function of midwifery, they now turn their hand to undertaking and reap their gains from the patient, living or dead. The need of governmental control in these reorganizations is obvious.

In the case of a bank which is unable to meet its obligation in full, or is even in danger of being unable to do so, control automatically passes from the directors of the organization into the hands of an impartial person appointed by law —the Superintendent of Banks. In defaulted real-estate bond issues, however, the original house of issue retains control, inasmuch as it alone has the power of the state. These houses can, and they do, make whatever terms they see fit, without any public supervision or publicity, and the bond holder is forced to accept such terms without a voice in the disposition of his property.

It is true that the deposit agreement prepared by the issuing house usually provides that if within twenty days or some other short period after the issuance of the plan, a majority of the bond holders object thereto, the plan becomes inoperative. But since the lists of bond holders are unavailable to any individual bond holder or group of bond holders, thereby precluding the possibility of such a majority, this provision is utterly meaningless.

Also, the grandiloquent terms contained in these plans of reorganization, and their involved financial structure, completely overcome the ordinary small investor, and at best he is left in a maze of technical terminology the real import of which can only be perceptible to the specialist in real-estate finance.

Contrast to this situation the system evolved for the protection of depositors against a defaulting bank. Immediately upon a bank's inability to pay its depositors in full, the state steps in and the Superintendent of Banks takes hold of all its assets, thereby putting the original directors out of the picture. He then proceeds to liquidate the assets of the bank solely for the benefit of the depositors. Should the directors of the bank or any other interested group propose a plan of reorganization, such plan is first subject to approval by the Superintendent of Banks, who is liable under the criminal statutes of the state should he violate his trust. Then, after such approval, the plan must come before a supreme-court judge upon notice to all of the depositors, and it is his duty to determine, not whether the majority approves the plan, but whether it is equitable. In addition, any one depositor is still privileged to appeal to the higher courts.

However, in spite of the fact that the aggregate amount of defaulted real-estate bonds far exceeds the deposits of all closed banks, there is still no protection for the bond holder.

What are the terms offered the bond holder at present under these plans of reorganization and what do they actually give him?

The American Bond and Mortgage Company, of whose issues upwards of $70,000,000 of bonds are in default, created a committee, presumably for the protection of bond holders. Several of the officers of the bond company have just been convicted by a federal jury of fraud in the sale of their bonds.

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tee, it is definitely known that four represent large creditor banks of the American Bond and Mortgage Company. These, in the era of wild speculation, made loans to this company and are now trying to recoup part of their losses as against the bond holders who have first mortgages on particular properties. Upon a foreclosure the bankers' claims would be eliminated. Their disregard of the bond holders' interest is clearly seen in the following specific disposition of property:

The Whitehall Hotel, on which the bond holders at the time of default had a first mortgage of $2,375,000, was subjected to a plan of reorganization by this committee whereby a new first mortgage of $400,000 was placed on the property and the bond holders were given stock in the company, in which holders of the second mortgage and others shared. The plan further demanded that these stocks be placed for a period of ten years with three voting trustees to be selected, not by the original bond holders, but by the very committee described above. The bond holders thus surrendered all rights in, and control of, their property for ten years. As for the disposition of the proceeds of the $400,000 new first mortgage, this bond holders' protective committee received $125,000 for its fees and expenses, and payments of other fees, aggregating over $100,000, were made to attorneys.

In the case of the numerous defaulted properties of S. W. Straus and Company, the committees appointed for the protection of the bond holders in each issue have until recently been composed of officers of that company.

In the specific case of the Book Cadillac Hotel, there were $9,000,000 of first-mortgage bonds and $1,050,000 of *general* mortgage bonds sold by Straus and Company. The term "general mortgage" is a ruse to disguise the fact that the bonds are really second-mortgage bonds. It would seem obvious that first and second-mortgage bond holders have interests hostile to each other, but the committees created by Straus and Company in both first and second-mortgage bonds are composed of the identical members, with this exception, that Mr. Samuel J. T. Straus appears as chairman of the first-mortgage committee, whereas Mr. Charles C. Irwin, who is secretary of the first-mortgage committee, appears as chairman of the second-mortgage committee.

The first-mortgage bonds were sold at a time when Straus and Company were advertising that there had been no loss to any investor for over forty years. The original circular of this issue stated a "conservative" appraisal of over $15,000,000, and that the mortgage also covered the furnishings and equipment of the hotel. Now we find, upon an analysis of the plan of reorganization, that there are obligations of this hotel for secured property notes of $905,000 which in the reorganization have been given priority over the first-mortgage bonds sold to the public. The reorganization plan made first mortgage is to be raised on the property and that out of its first proceeds the $905,000 chattel mortgage on furniture is to be paid, prior to any distribution to the old bond holders, even though the bonds were originally sold on the basis that they were a first mortgage on the "building together with its furnishings and equipment." If the bond holders have a rightful claim for damages against Straus and Company for this amount, they have not been apprised of this fact by the committee and they perhaps never will become aware of it. The plan goes on to provide, after the distribution of thirty cents in cash, for the distribution to the first-mortgage bond holders, of second-mortgage bonds with a reduced interest rate on which the interest is only to be paid if earned. It then provides for the distribution of other inferior mortgage bonds to other lien holders, even though it appears that the original first-mortgage bond holders will never get their obligations paid in full. As in all these reorganizations, the bond holders are given a certain number of shares of stock, which are then tied up with voting trustees for a long period of time so that they release control of the properties to nominees of the issuing house.

Weak and meager as are the various statements made—as to the effects of the plan of reorganization; as to the past operations of the hotels; as to the commissions originally charged by Straus and Company and their possible interest in the plan; as to data concerning the chattel mortgage with which the bond holders for the first time now find that the property is burdened—we find in the body of the letter that the appointees of the Straus company further shirk all responsibility for their acts by this amazing reservation:

> The above statements are based upon reports and other information received by the committee and are believed to be correct. These statements and figures, however, are not intended to be construed as representations or warranties, and are not guaranteed by the committee and are subject to change at the discretion of the committee.

It would seem a mercy that the average individual bond holder cannot understand what he is in for under these plans of reorganization, but assuming that he did realize his plight, he is at present absolutely helpless, for several pertinent reasons. First, he cannot create a dissenting committee among his fellow bond holders because the list is not available to anyone but the house of issue. Second, deposits of bonds are made with the committee under a very technical legal instrument which gives the committee full power in the control of the bonds, with the sole proviso that anyone wishing to dissent to the plan must do so within twenty days and pay the committee such an amount as it "may in its sole and uncontrolled discretion fix as a fair contribution toward the indebtedness, obliga-

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if he does withdraw, he will only be entitled to a proportionate share of the foreclosure purchase price, less foreclosure expenses. As for the foreclosure price, the committee having in its control a large amount of bonds, can fix this price at as low a figure as possible, and as has happened in several cases, practically wipe out the bond holders. The dissenter hasn't even a fighting chance.

As a result of public criticism, S. W. Straus and Company have recently relinquished their committee control on twenty of their defaulted properties to an independent committee. While this is an excellent step forward, it affects so small a percentage of the bond holders that it in no substantial way alters the present situation.

There is grave need for remedial legislation whereby the control of defaulted real-estate bond issues can be taken out of the hands of the issuing house, and of a statute whereby a holder of defaulted securities shall be enabled to communicate with fellow bond holders. In addition, statutes should be passed in the various states where the properties are located, directing courts to review the acts of trustees and plans of reorganization upon the request of any bond holder or group of bond holders.

Without some such immediate governmental protection, the perpetrators of the real-estate bond bubble will emerge from the depression—which they cleverly use as a smokescreen to hide their past bad financing—with the control of enormous properties rightly belonging to a vast body of bond holders.

BERNARD J. REIS.

After the Dearborn Massacre

DESPITE the first stories issued to the press by the police, the testimony now seems to show that the 3,000 demonstrators in the mass parade to the Ford Motor Company plant were unarmed, and that the Dearborn and Ford police, using not only revolvers but a machine gun, fired at them unnecessarily, even after the crowd had begun to turn back. Already the Civil Liberties Union is taking a hand in the case; the families of the victims are planning to institute civil suits against Henry Ford and the Ford Motor Company; all the "rioters" who were under arrest have been released without being required to give bond; public opinion, particularly in Detroit itself, is largely against Ford; the city administration blames Ford's own policies, and the repressive policies of the Dearborn administration, for the tragic outcome.

Briefly stated, the following appears to be substantially what occurred:

About 3,000 participants in an unemployed demonstration on Monday, March 7, marched with police permission along Fort Street from downtown Detroit to the Dearborn city limits. They were walking in orderly formation, four abreast, singing or joking, carrying banners. A few hundred women were among them. They stopped just before reaching Dearborn and were addressed by Alfred Goetz, who instructed them to remain orderly, to use no violence and to maintain "proletarian discipline." At the Dearborn limits they turned into Miller Road and were met by about fifty Dearborn police, who ordered them to turn back. No parade permit had been issued in Dearborn, in accordance with local policy toward radical demonstrations, although in Detroit the permit, under Mayor Murphy's liberal policy, had been granted. The police made no attempt to arrest Goetz. using up, according to one report, tear gas worth $1,750. Maddened by the gas, the crowd picked up stones and threw them at the police. The police retreated, made another stand, retreated again. Finally the police used their guns, killing one and wounding some others. Then Harry H. Bennett, chief of Ford's private police, drove his car into the crowd and fired either his revolver or his tear-gas gun at the demonstrators. He was hit by a rock, and was taken back toward factory gate number three by the police, who then, in conjunction with plain-clothes men in Ford's employ, opened up with their revolvers, wounding others. The crowd, several hundred feet from the gate, were then on the point of retreating, when the police and plain-clothes men opened fire again with a machine gun, killing three more and wounding over a score. The crowd broke and ran. The workers carried off some of their wounded fellow marchers, leaving the dead and others of the wounded lying in the road.

A score or so were arrested, and the wounded, taken to the Receiving Hospital and to other hospitals for treatment, were placed under technical arrest and chained to their beds. Maurice Sugar, attorney retained by the International Labor Defense for the arrested men, obtained their release on writs of habeas corpus.

On Friday night the Communists held an immense meeting in Arena Gardens, undisturbed by the police. Nearly six thousand people packed the hall and there were several speakers, including Biedenkapp of New York, and Alfred Goetz, one of the five men the authorities are supposed to be looking for. The police made no attempt to arrest Goetz.

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At Ferry Hall on Saturday afternoon the bodies lay in state. Above the coffins, against the wall, hung a huge red banner bearing a picture of Lenin. On one side was the motto, "Ford Gave Bullets for Bread," and on the other, "Police Bullets Killed Them." Red roses were banked in front of the coffins. The band played the Russian funeral march of 1905. Rudolph Baker, Communist district organizer, in a brief address spoke of the lives of Joe York, Joe Bussell, Joe De Blasio and Coleman Lenz—York had worked in Ohio coal mines, seventeen-year-old Bussell had planned to go to the Soviet Union—and declared, "In the name of the district committee of the Communist party of Detroit, we lay the blame for these murders directly upon the shoulders of Henry Ford and Mayor Murphy."

At Grand Circus Park, an hour later, from the thirteenth floor of Eaton Tower, I watched the parade move down Woodward Avenue. Witnessed by several thousand spectators, the procession came slowly toward Grand Circus Park, the band in front playing the "Internationale," a massed square of workers carrying a huge red banner with the slogan in white letters, "Smash the Ford-Murphy Police Terror." The funeral cortege of a score of automobiles came next, and after it, as far as I could see up Woodward Avenue, workers in mass formation, carrying banners. At least 20,000 must have participated. According to The Detroit Times, a total of 30,000 gathered at Grand Circus Park.

The police had cleared all traffic off Woodward Avenue. For two hours no wheel moved on that street except those in the parade. The roars of the crowd, cheering their speakers and booing the police, arose in waves to the window at which I watched. The crowd divided, some remaining in the park to listen to speeches, others packing into the five hundred automobiles which drove up, like a huge Ford belt line, to carry the marchers to the cemetery.

It was bitter cold, but the late sun shone on the tall silvered smokestacks of Ford's River Rouge plant, the smokestacks glistening against the sky like a huge pipe organ. Directly adjoining the road that passes the Ford Factory, on the extreme edge of Woodmere Cemetery, a lot had been purchased. Here in one grave the bodies were buried, and here, it was announced, within sight of the Ford Factory, not far from where the men had been shot to death, a monument would be erected, bearing an inscription to commemorate the manner of their killing.

In three successive interviews in his office, Mayor Murphy assured me that free speech and free assemblage would be guaranteed in Detroit while he was mayor. "We don't ordinarily require Communists to get a permit," he declared. "In most cases they need only serve notice and there will be no interference." He said that while he had no wish to criticize the Dearborn administration he believed that if they had had a similar policy in regard to radical demonstrations, the tragedy would not have occurred. "In Detroit," he said, "mass meetings and parades are held as a matter of right—police merely supervise and regulate." Further, all groups "have been welcomed regularly at the City Hall to express their grievances or petition for redress."

In the killings at the Ford plant, he maintained, "the Detroit police and the Detroit policy were not involved. . . . The entire conflict was between the Dearborn police, the Ford police and the demonstrators."

Police Commissioner John K. Watkins, who is a former Rhodes scholar, confirmed Mayor Murphy's statements.

"You consider the privilege of demonstrating and holding public mass meetings a municipal right in Detroit, don't you?" he was asked.

"Not only a municipal right, but a constitutional right, both state and national," the police commissioner replied.

It happens that the Ford-Dearborn police policy is directly opposed to Mayor Murphy's, and at the last election Ford's candidate, John Lodge, was defeated by Murphy. Ford's factory is outside the city limits. He does not pay a cent of taxes to the city. Though Detroit has extended its territory in all directions, and is beginning to encircle Dearborn, Ford has steadily resisted the incorporation of Dearborn into the city of Detroit. He steadily refuses, it is said, to contribute to the City Welfare Department, although thousands of his former employees are dependent upon the Department for aid. Clyde Ford, the mayor of Dearborn, is a relative of Henry Ford's and owns a Ford agency. Henry Ford's frequent announcements that he is going to "open up," hire thousands more men, start prosperity going again, "risk all" in an effort to end the depression, and so forth—announcements which he does not carry out and apparently does not intend to—anger Detroit middle-class residents and business men, particularly since such announcements keep unemployed men pouring into Detroit seeking jobs which do not exist.

The majority of Detroiters support Murphy and hate Ford. Barbers, waitresses, clerks, most white-collar workers—not radical in any sense—say such things as, "I wish they'd tear down his whole factory. Maybe *that* would give the unemployed a job, building it up again."

Murphy is backed solidly by the American Federation of Labor, by the Negroes because of his fairness as a judge in the trial some years ago of a Negro who defended his house against a mob and was tried for manslaughter, by the Catholic vote (after all, Murphy is Irish), and by a considerable proportion of the liberals, who remember in particular his post-war campaign against the war profiteers. Moreover, Murphy is ambitious. He is an old-fashioned Jeffersonian Democrat with modern political astuteness who is not above political

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The fight against Ford, if Murphy has the courage to take it up, will make an issue upon which he might climb far above the mayoralty of Detroit.

In this situation, however, Murphy is attacked very nearly as much as Ford. The world thinks of the Ford industries as being in Detroit, and of Frank Murphy, the mayor, as officially responsible. During the half hour that I sat in the mayor's office on Saturday, his secretary collected the telegrams that had arrived during the preceding few hours and I looked them over. Fourteen protests had come in that morning from various organizations and meetings condemning the murders. There was a telegram from the Needle Trades' Industrial Union of Chicago, another from the Young Communist League of Negaunee, Michigan, another from a branch of the International Workers' Order located somewhere in New York, another, a long resolution adopted at a mass meeting, from students and teachers in the Columbia Social Problems Club. The latter, referring to the fact of industrial depression and the peaceful nature of the unemployed demonstration at which the shooting occurred, declared that "the blame for this ruthless terrorism rests squarely upon the shoulders of Henry Ford and the municipal government of Detroit."

To a man like Frank Murphy, these things burn. He sent a long telegram to The Young Worker, organ of the Young Communist League. The League had bitterly protested the murder because three of the dead were members of the organization. The telegram was published on the front page of The Young Worker with a list of sharp and pertinent questions for Murphy to answer.

And, after all, Murphy, despite the fact that his city probably provides more freedom of speech than any other in the country, does have things to answer, or at least explain. He does not, probably, expect Communist support in his administration—after all, he favors a retention of capitalism, however much he would like to remove some of its features—but he does want them to *let him alone*. When telegrams continue to pour in and the demonstrators continue to link his name with Ford's—"the Ford-Murphy Police Terror"—he asks, plaintively, "How can they do this to *me?*"

It is not his fault, of course, that the Wayne County Council of the American Legion in the Detroit district secretly passed a resolution introduced by Leonard Coyne, an attorney, on the Ford "riot," saying, "we tender to the Ford Motor Company and other Wayne County industries the assistance of our organization and pledge them the support of all members in any further emergency." But it shows a situation which interpenetrates official Detroit. Miles N. Culehan, one of the assistant prosecutors in charge of the grand-jury investigation and an ex-service man, said in an interview with me and another journalist, "I don't care who knows it, but I say I wish they'd killed a

Furthermore, Hugh Quinn and three other Detroit detectives were present throughout the affair, and in the first edition of The Detroit Free Press Quinn is quoted as saying that Harry Bennett shot a man during the riot. But afterward, when quizzed severely by Murphy, Quinn denied everything, claiming that his presence in Dearborn was accidental and that he saw only stones flying in the air. Several raids on Communist party and Trade Union Unity League headquarters were carried out during the next two or three days after the riot and some of these were made by Detroit police. This is explained on the ground that in Detroit the municipal police serve warrants issued by county officers not under the mayor's control (an explanation much weakened, however, by the fact that in at least one raid the police had no warrant).

More damaging to the mayor's claims are certain actions of the Detroit police reported by four injured demonstrators who were treated in hospitals: Robert Dorn, Harry Cruden, Eugene Macks and David Grey, young men varying in age from nineteen to twenty-seven. Grey was injured by a shot which grazed his scalp, but he was able to get away by himself and was treated by a private physician. The next day, his head bandaged, he was arrested in a restaurant by a Detroit policeman, taken to police headquarters in Detroit, fingerprinted, then turned over to Dearborn police, who fingerprinted him again and kept him in jail a night before he was released. The cases of the other three are all similar. They were wounded by the firing, were taken to the Receiving Hospital for treatment, but under what is called "technical arrest." That is to say, they were handcuffed and chained to their beds during their stay in the hospital from Monday night till Friday afternoon. Under the terms of the writ of habeas corpus obtained by Maurice Sugar on Wednesday, all arrested persons were supposed to be released without charges and without bond not later than Thursday. These three were taken from the hospital Friday —and instead of being released were taken to Detroit police headquarters and fingerprinted. Then the Dearborn police were called, and the patrol took them to the Dearborn jail, where all three were fingerprinted again, photographed, then placed in cells and with no charges against them were detained for four days, when they were released.

It was this many-sided and frequently obscure interworking of the Detroit police with the Dearborn police, as well as the desperate condition of the unemployed generally, against which the Communist delegation of fourteen, headed by George Kristolsky, protested vigorously when they appeared on Monday, March 14—one week after the massacre —before the Detroit Council and the mayor.

Meanwhile new machine guns have been purchased for the Dearborn police, and papers carry announcements that any other attempts at demonstrations will be met with guns.

OAKLEY JOHNSON

Detroit.

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Chaos or Control

IV: *Russia's Economic Inventions*[1]

SOVIET RUSSIA has avidly made use of our machinery and engineering skill; can we make use of any of her economic inventions?

Two extreme groups of opinion deny that we can—the American Communists and the American reactionaries. The Communists call anybody who talks about planning without revolution a Fascist and an enemy of the working class; the reactionaries call anybody who talks about planning without revolution a Communist in disguise. If the argument is not thus to evaporate in the calling of names, we must look more closely at the facts.

The most obvious set of facts has to do with a difference in the general economic situation of the two nations. Soviet Russia began with a vast area touched only in spots with modern industrialism. Russia's economic difficulty was at first—and still is—a scarcity of goods, and of the means of producing goods, in relation to the ambition for a higher general standard of life.

The United States is much further along the scale of industrial development than Russia was at the time of her revolution. In our earlier years we had, like her, depended on our exportable surpluses in order to buy manufactures from abroad. We shipped out wheat, cotton, beef, pork and the like in exchange for machinery, cloth and fabricated articles of all kinds. We still have exportable surpluses of these things, as well as of oil, copper and many other natural products, though our timber and furs have been so ruthlessly exploited that they are no longer abundant. But now we have developed a great system of manufactures as well. We have exportable surpluses of automobiles, steel, machinery, cotton cloth and many other fabricated goods—or the equipment to produce such surpluses, which amounts to the same thing. Our economic problem is not that of scarcity, but, paradoxically, that of relative abundance. We have made so many goods that many of us are in danger of starving and freezing to death.

When the Soviet leaders became convinced that a world revolution was not imminent, they turned their attention to the rapid building of a great and rounded industrial plant within their own nation. The Soviet Union has increased its production at what is probably a more rapid rate than has ever been known before in any country. It has probably saved more capital in proportion to the national income than any other country has ever done. This statement sounds absurd in view of the fact that Russia has abolished "capitalism." But Russia has not abolished capital—the difference is that her saving and her capital are social instead of individual. All the national effort devoted to erecting factories and mills and hydro-electric plants instead of making more food and clothing was a process of saving and of capital formation just as truly as if each individual citizen had received in money a larger income and had saved about half of it for investment in factories, mills and hydro-electric plants.

If the United States were to develop a national economic plan, it would be compelled to seek quite different immediate objectives. We have no need of enduring great sacrifices in order to buy more things abroad, or to build up our basic industries. Physically, our job would be much easier than Russia's has been. We already have most of the material equipment which the Russian people have striven so heroically to acquire. But mentally, we should have a less simple and easy task than any she has faced so far. External necessities set the first goals for the Russian planners. It was not difficult for them to see what they had to attempt and why. In this respect their task was analogous to our war planning. They had to lay out a system of power plants, factories, mines and oil wells, acquire the materials and the skill to build them and train the people to operate them. This was a gigantic undertaking to execute. But, logically, its outlines were pretty clear. There were definite criteria of judgment as to what was needed, and where, and how much, and when, just as there were in our economic war machine. Purchasing power was largely mobilized by the government itself, especially since the monopolized foreign trade played so large a part in the scheme. But the United States could not begin its planning with a governmental attempt to build a brand-new industrial plant. We could not create employment in quite that way. Slavish imitation of the first Soviet Five Year Plan would get us nowhere. It is irrelevant to our situation.

There are, however, other elements in which the Russian economy is more like our own than either the propagandist advocates or the opponents of the Soviets are willing to admit. Let us list briefly a number of these broad points of similarity:

I. *Financial institutions.* It uses money; it has banks; it even resorts to borrowing by the government and the payment of interest.

2. *Profits.* Profits are made by its industrial and commercial units—though these profits are not dis-

[1] This is the fourth of a series of five articles, which are condensed and adapted from chapters in a forthcoming book entitled

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3. *Capital.* Capital is accumulated and is invested in new productive equipment.

4. *Unequal rewards.* The payment for work is unequal (though the inequalities are not nearly so great as in this country). Piece rates are widely used in the payment of wages.

5. *Accounting.* Careful accounts are kept in each factory, store or other unit, and the management of each is responsible for operating it without a deficit on the books.

6. *Free choice by consumers.* Individual purchasers buy, with money, the goods that are for sale in cooperative and other stores. They exercise free choice in what they buy, so far as they can do so within the range of articles offered for sale and the prices charged. Rationing is resorted to only in the case of necessities of which there is a scarcity, and then only so long as a scarcity exists.

7. *Decentralized management.* The details of industrial and commercial life are not directed by a central board or a bureaucracy. Given a central decision on main policies, as much stress is laid on decentralization of activity and responsibility as in most large American corporations.

8. *Change and adjustment.* Industrial life is not governed by a hard-and-fast plan which is not subject to change. Changes in planning are constantly made. Mistakes occur, are acknowledged and corrected. Soviet economy has probably changed and developed more rapidly than any other in history. The planning function is not primarily a restricting one, but a stimulating one.

But here we verge into the differences between the Soviet economic system and our own. The similarities have been emphasized in order to show that a planned economy—even so thoroughly planned an economy as the Russian—does not involve so drastic a change in all our habits and ways of behaving as it may appear without careful study of the facts.

Having observed general similarities between the Russian system of management and our own, it remains to point out the differences.

The central difference is that in the Soviet Union there are basic decisions as to the policy and objectives of the collective life, whereas in our society the necessity for making such decisions is not acknowledged and there is nobody charged with making them. These decisions are made, in Russia, by the Communist party. The policy decisions are made by political instrumentalities, and political activity is dominated by a political machine. It is, to be sure, a political machine with high social standards, which rigorously checks graft and personal ambition. But it is important to note that central to the whole endeavor is political control of a recognizable type. The difference is that in Russia metering out of collective policies, whereas our political control serves, in the main, the ends of the varied private interests which pay its bills. This circumstance is one of the things which prevents our political machines from attending more than they do to general policies. The assumption in this country is, whenever any assumption is made, that the interaction of all the numerous private interests will automatically produce the most desirable general policy. We abandoned that assumption temporarily for war purposes, and we must abandon it whenever we want to tackle national economic planning.

The basic decisions made by the Communist party include such things as that the State shall own and control land and natural resources, factories, machinery, banks, stores, merchandising agencies, etc., and that all these things shall be used for the benefit of the whole population (except of those whom the socialist State regards as enemies or useless persons, like saboteurs, priests, private traders and private employers).

It does not follow that exactly the same basic decisions would have to be made by a policy body in the United States or another country. Public opinion in the world has been so conditioned by industrialism and the liberal democratic slogans which accompanied its birth that the main objective of an acceptable policy in any country would almost necessarily be the same as the Russian objective—enhancement of the general popular well being. There might, however, be more doubt as to whether it was necessary, in pursuit of this end, for the State to expropriate all productive or business property. It is perfectly possible to conceive of a policy-making body deciding to experiment with other means of control before concluding that general state ownership was necessary. It may be that private productive property is not in itself incompatible with the general welfare, but is incompatible only to the extent that it prevents or resists planning exercised in behalf of the workers by hand and brain. Experiment might be made to determine how stubborn and unavoidable that resistance would be.

Having laid out a policy, it is possible to begin to plan. At the top, the Soviet Union has a State Planning Commission. It is not just a small board of men, but a huge office, with many divisions and subordinates. And its function is not that of supreme industrial command, but of advice and correlation. It is to the administration of industry what the General Staff of the army is to the officers of the line. The State Planning Commission does not draw up detailed plans for every factory and every nook and corner of Russia; such a task would be impossible to execute in time, and the resulting plan could not be successfully administered. What it does is to translate the national policy into the main concrete objectives to be achieved. Every industry, every plant, every subordinate governmental unit, has its own planning commission. As soon as

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down the general framework, these intermediary and local bodies proceed to make their own plans and draw up their own production schedules within the national plan. Decisions which are only of local or regional importance are made finally by the local or regional planning bodies. But decisions which vitally affect the All-Union plan are passed up again to the State Planning Commission, which coördinates and revises them. Thus planning proceeds simultaneously from the top down and from the bottom up.

How does this scheme work, say, in a single factory or mill? An interesting description of this process is given by A. Ford Hinrichs and William Adams Brown, Jr., in their paper on "The Planned Economy of Soviet Russia" in The Political Science Quarterly for September, 1931. A textile plant, let us say, begins its calculations with standards of efficiency which it can attain, or hopes to attain. How much cotton cloth of various types can it turn out from a given quantity of raw cotton and with a given number of workers? These standards are reached by engineering studies of the plant, comparison with standards achieved elsewhere, conferences between management and workers' committees, and revision from above. With standards established, the plant knows how much it should produce in the ensuing year, how much cotton it will need for that production, and how much labor, at the standard working hours, it will require. The wage scale is fixed for the year by negotiations with the union. (Wage scales are of course partly determined by general policies.) With wages fixed and standards of efficiency set, it is possible to calculate the total wage bill for the year. The price of raw cotton is fixed for the year by the central authorities. Since the mill knows how much cotton it will need, according to its plan, the bill for materials can also be estimated. "Other expenses, *including depreciation but excluding any return on plant investment,* are figured in precisely the same manner that an American accountant would set up the books of a New England textile mill." To these elements of cost there is added "a planned profit to be distributed for certain specified purposes," partly for housing and social and welfare work, and partly to be passed over to the State. This accounting determines the cost of production, which in turn determines the price at which the cloth is sold to the distributing organization. Prices are so important in a controlled economy, however, that in practice final decisions on price policy are made by the supreme political authority.

The distributing organization is permitted to add a certain percentage to cover its own expenses, this percentage being determined by familiar engineering and accounting methods, and finally being fixed by the State Planning Commission in conference with the interests concerned. The cloth is distributed to coöperative stores through their central organ, and they take a certain percentage for their products. The local coöperative organizations other industry, the price is fixed by the Supreme Economic Council, which is the general administrative body over industry, as distinguished from the State Planning Commission, which has mainly advisory functions.

Two things are obvious from this brief survey of the planning process. One is that without the basis of local planning and decentralized administration the central planning organizations would be helpless. Their calculations rest upon the summation of realistic details. The other is the basic importance of labor. The trade unions, protecting the interest of the workers in the matter of wages, have an important influence on labor costs. But the unions act as well in the interest of greater efficiency. They are active in selling to the workers the idea that the more efficient the productive methods are, the better off they will be. And the pressure of labor upon management for greater efficiency is important in many cases. There is also the constant drive of the central organization for more production and higher efficiency, which sometimes revises production schedules so far upward that they are impossible of accomplishment, but which also sometimes revises them above the goal thought possible by subordinate bodies and yet achieves the result desired.

A further word is necessary about the organization of productive industries, distribution and finance. There is, as stated above, a general administrative authority over industry, the Supreme Economic Council. Food industries are under a different head, the Commissariat for Supplies. Under these national bodies there is, for each of the most important industries, a great combination which in general directs the operations of the factories, buys the raw materials and sells the product. Under these combinations there are subsidiary trusts for more detailed and technical direction. The producing organization is therefore similar to that familiar to us in such companies as General Motors and United States Steel, each with its subsidiaries. But with us there is no national industrial authority at the top—unless we conceive as such the thousand or so men who have controlling interests in the big banks and corporations which do about 40 percent of the business in this country.

The distributive system is simpler than our own, but has many points of similarity. Products of industry destined for the use of other industries pass to them in accordance with the plan, through the proper industrial organizations. Goods required for export are sold to the foreign-trade monopoly, as part of the export plan. The foreign-trade monopoly in turn supplies the industries with required imports. Goods destined for individual consumers are sold to the central coöperative organization for distribution to the coöperative stores. Much the same system is used for distribution of farm

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consumers' goods, based on the experience of the previous year, and the changes in population, in consuming habits and in local purchasing power. This requisition passes through the central coöperative organization to the State Planning Commission, where it is matched against the production program. So far, output has for the most part been inadequate to satisfy the coöperatives' requisitions, but wherever it is more than adequate, the excess product is distributed through state stores, which are retail outlets of the manufacturing trusts, and sell at the same prices as the coöperatives. If, in the United States, retail trade were principally in the hands of a single combination including the big chain stores, the department stores and the mail-order houses, an extension of their existing methods of calculating demand would provide much the same estimate of requirements for consumers' goods as now exists in the Soviet Union.

The development of the banking system in the Soviet economy is particularly interesting. Banking is of course monopolized by the government. Each of the great industrial or trade agencies keeps an account at the State Bank. Knowing its requirements for credit in advance, it is provided quarterly with enough credit to meet its needs for cash and deposits during each quarter. Payments from one agency to another are made by transfers of credit on the books of the bank. We accomplish the same result, in our less centralized banking system, by drawing checks or drafts, which pass through correspondent banks or clearing houses.

The allotment of these short-term credits by the State Bank rests, not upon momentary decisions or unrelated requests by "customers," but upon financial plans worked out in advance by the several industrial-planning agencies. No plan, no credit. The financial plan of each concern is of course based on a budget—a device familiar to our more progressive businesses. And the State Bank is not a mere passive agency, granting credits as requested. Its own economists not only supervise the budgets and the financial plans of the trusts, but take an active part in drawing them up, thus providing a control and a check not unfamiliar in our own banking practice. The local industrial organization, the combination of which it is a part, and the bank may disagree as to how much credit is required by the local organization. If the disagreement cannot be settled among them, a final appeal may be made to the government.

Hinrichs and Brown state, in their paper mentioned above:

> The fact that the State Bank is the banker for all producing units in Russia and that the working capital allowed them is a function of fixed prices and efficiency ratios, provides on the books of the bank a continuous audit of plant efficiency in the utilization of materials and labor. If, under these conditions, plan, it will come to the end of this period with a balance in the State Bank which can be exactly calculated in advance. If it operates more efficiently than it is instructed to do in the plan, it will have a larger balance than that planned for; if less efficiently, a smaller balance. This circumstance gives the planning authorities in the comparison of budgeted and actual costs an immediate and automatic measure of the efficiency of every factory in the Soviet Union.

It will be seen from the above that while we have many of the same banking practices in embryo, we have not extended and combined them into the control of credit on the engineering and accounting basis which Russia employs. With us, the banks have final say as to how much credit may be granted in specific cases, and their decisions are frequently not based on good financial plans of the borrowing concerns. Even should these plans exist, the bank may be influenced by extraneous considerations like its opportunities for profit or the size of its reserves.

So much for short-term credit. Long-term credit, to be used for capital purposes such as expansion of plants and purchase of machinery, is furnished by a long-term credit department of the State Bank, which serves industry, and by similar institutions for the coöperative distributing organizations, the municipalities, and agriculture. The funds for this investment are derived in part from the profits of industry, which, so far as they are not used for local housing and welfare, pass into the budget of the State. We have rudiments of the same practice in the direct reinvestment of profits by our industrial corporations. In both cases this is compulsory saving, as far as the individual is concerned. But the important difference is that with us each corporation decides how its surplus is to be invested, whereas in Russia the surplus profits are pooled nationally and are invested according to the general plan for future development. Other sources of capital are state revenues from taxes and loans, and, sometimes, even currency inflation.

A financial plan for the nation is made annually and revised quarterly. It includes the governmental budget, short-term credit and capital investment—factors which are obviously interrelated in any nation, but are especially and explicitly related in the Russian scheme. This plan must be approved both by the State Planning Commission and by the State Bank, which has a veto power which can be overridden only by the central political authority. It is clear that the planning and control of finance is one of the most important instruments of the whole Russian planning system. It furnishes a constant check which ramifies throughout the whole structure. For credit is the life blood of production and trade, while the accumulation and allocation of new capital determine the whole direction of national development. Our difficulties of inflation and deflation, of underequipment or overequipment of industries, are central in our economic confusion. If they could

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would disappear. But, of course, financial order cannot be created without an intelligent framework which determines how we want our resources of labor energy and materials to be used.

We have mentioned controlled prices and profits, in several connections. It may be well here to give a more connected account of their place in the system. No factory or store manager has to bargain in the markets for the price he is to receive. Either it is fixed by the calculation of production cost as previously described, or it is revised upward or downward in accordance with some policy of the central authority (such as that policy, for instance, which aims to discourage the use of luxuries until the basic industries are built up and the need for common necessities is satisfied). In any case, however, the manager's job is the purely technical one of producing as much as possible, of a sufficiently high quality, at as low a cost as possible—wages and prices of material being fixed. It is not the "business" job of stretching selling prices upward and pushing buying prices downward.

If the selling price is planned to allow the factory a profit at the standard of efficiency adopted at the beginning of a year, and if the factory makes the planned amount of goods at the level of efficiency set, its profit will appear according to plan. The profit will be found in the factory's credit balance on the books of the State Bank. If the planned profit does not appear, there is something the matter, either with the amount of product, or with the efficiency of operation. These in turn may have other causes, which are investigated. Intense effort is devoted to remedying the condition. A company may be allowed to continue for a time operating at a loss by the advance of credit, just as it may in this country, but not indefinitely. Measures are taken to correct whatever is wrong. If all else fails, the price may be adjusted. No concern goes "out of production," throwing workers into the street, just because it does not make a profit. It operates because it is needed in the plan, if it is allowed to operate at all. And if it is needed, it is worth paying for. If a company makes more than the planned profit by exceeding its quota, so much the better. This fact also appears on the bank's books. Thus the absence or the size of profits acts as a spur to management much as it does in the United States. It acts as a spur to better technical management, however, rather than as spur to exploiting other interests.

If prices in any industry are, by general policy, kept below the cost of production, the deficit is made up, not by an indefinite expansion of short-term credit from the bank, but an advance of new capital. This is of course a subsidy, and is recognized as such. It must be balanced in the national financial plan by an excess profit somewhere else. The United States and other nations likewise grant subsidies—as to shipping interests or beneficiaries of a protective tariff—but we are not so careful to balance the books of the national economy, or to grant subsidies in pursuit of a coördinated national objective. In Russia it is not contemplated that any industry shall continue to be subsidized permanently.

Once profits are made, they are used according to plan. Ten or 20 percent may be used directly for the benefit of the workers in the industry in question, as for housing, restaurants, kindergartens, nurseries, clinics and the like. The State takes 10 percent as a tax. Twenty percent goes toward expanding the operations or equipment of the industry. And the rest goes into the general financial budget for use as new capital wherever it may be most needed. It is by this means that the Soviet Union has been enabled to save and reinvest so much and so rapidly. The combined control of wages, prices and profits has thus directed the energy of the country temporarily toward building up basic industry instead of toward making more goods for use by the general population. The same control can reverse this policy any time when it is so desired.

In last week's article we saw that, in planning for war, the United States was successful largely because the government had mobilized a large amount of purchasing power. In Russia, though political dictatorship plays a large part, the mobilization of purchasing power is obviously important as an economic instrument of carrying on the daily life of planning. Individual consumers' purchasing power is mobilized through the coöperatives, which are thus enabled to present a schedule of consumption to productive industry. The government, by its control of credit and capital investment, mobilizes the purchasing power of the several industries for raw materials, for one another's products and for imports.

Likewise, Soviet Russia has a means of increasing purchasing power as her production increases. She can distribute it in wages, or collect it in profits to be paid out again for more production, as she pleases. It is difficult to see how any crisis could possibly arise from such a thing as general "overproduction" in the Soviet economy, if it can be operated in practice as in theory it is laid out.

And Russia has an objective which is capable both of arousing general enthusiasm and of furnishing bases of judgment for its planning decisions.

These are the outstanding lessons to be learned, so far, from Russian planning. There is here no attempt to approve or disapprove, to predict success or failure, even to follow more than the main outlines of what is, in fact, a highly complex and rapidly changing system. But, from a cool distance which permits a large perspective, it would appear that we can perhaps make better use of the Russian experience than many have thought. Though in many respects the Soviet system differs widely from our own, the economic and engineering techniques which it is using are not wholly foreign to thought and practice in North America.

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Washington Notes

Wets on the Warpath—Who Will Lead the Battle?—Garner's Sales Tax—Recalcitrant Jim Watson

THE WET tide in the Republican party is rising fast, and for a long time I have not seen anyone more militant than such Republican members of Congress as, for example, Robert Bacon and Ruth Pratt of New York, James Beck of Philadelphia, Senators Hiram Bingham of Connecticut, Barber and Kean of New Jersey, and others. Even the phlegmatic Tilson of Connecticut, since the House voted on the Beck-Linthicum resolution, seems inclined to feel that the time has gone by when the Republican party platform can afford to ignore the evils of prohibition and the necessity for some sort of modification. Of course, the fact that Mr. Tilson will come up for reelection this fall in a district which is much Wetter than it was has something to do with his party views on this subject. The truth is that the fear of running on the ticket with a Dry Hoover has more than a little to do with the militancy of most of them. The pressure exerted upon the poor President to open the door on this question and to get away from an unequivocal Dry stand is increasing. In the end, skeptical as I have heretofore been, I am inclined to think this pressure may have some effect.

Ever since the House voted on the Beck-Linthicum bill, Wet leaders on the Republican side have been shooting arguments into the White House circle. Some of the Wets go to the President himself, tell their tale and find him wholly noncommittal. Others work on the administration secretariat—as if that would do any good—and upon the principal administration politicians and Cabinet members, who are Wet anyhow. A literary and telegraphic bombardment has begun. In short, nothing will be left undone to convince Mr. Hoover of the importance of ameliorating his views—or at least clarifying them.

Naturally, these efforts are largely inspired by the selfish interest of Senators and Representatives living in Wet states, but they are none the less sincere—and probably just as effective. The fact that 97 of the 187 Wet votes in the House were cast by Republicans and only 90 by Democrats, has started a new cry on the Republican side. "We are the Wet party, not the Democrats," they shout. Actually there seems some foundation for the claim. Beyond doubt the Dry strength is largely in the Democratic South; the really Wet states are nearly all east of the Mississippi and normally Republican—New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois—and even Ohio. A further argument that the Republican is the Wet party is based on the fact that the states whose vote controls the Electoral College are thoroughly Wet, and a Dry Republican candidate will be terribly handicapped in them, for he must run against a Democrat who stands for repeal, regardless of economic issues. It is, say these Republican Wets, all very well to talk about economic issues being paramount in the approaching campaign, but the fact remains that more votes

Some time next month the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform will descend upon Washington, hold a convention and a banquet, pass resolutions, make speeches and call upon the President. There will, I am told, be more than a thousand of them and they undoubtedly will make a terrific din. Led by the somewhat overrated but tremendously energetic Mrs. Pauline Sabin, this organization has taken on a decidedly Republican flavor, and Mrs. Sabin, once National Committeewoman from New York, now openly counsels a repudiation of Hoover if the Democrats nominate a Wet and he stays Dry.

I do not want to give the impression that I think this Sabin organization will have much effect upon Mr. Hoover. It seems to be more fashionable than political, and the number of women who really follow Mrs. Sabin is negligible. The majority of them, like the majority of women on every political question, will follow the male head of the family. The women's vote is just as much of a delusion now as it was before. Women do not function politically as a separate entity—they never have, and I do not think they ever will. Nevertheless, these particular women will give an impressive performance in Washington and there will be vast publicity.

It is publicity that counts, and the Wets are getting a far larger share of it all the time. In the end publicity drives politicians to cover. They stand up against it for a while, but when it really begins to pour, they run for shelter. Hence I am of the opinion that the question of the Republican platform pronouncement on prohibition and the attitude of the President are even now being most seriously considered by the responsible leaders close to the White House, with the hope that a way will be found to incline both toward modification. Extraordinary as it may seem, I am told that Dr. Fess of Ohio, as completely an Anti-Saloon League Senator as we have had, feels that something must be done. If the arid and righteous Fess really does incline this way, then anything may happen.

The fight over the sales-tax bill in the House engrossed the thought and attention of Democrats generally last week—and will for some days to come. I do not mean merely the Democratic leaders in Congress, but those outside as well. The fact seems to be that if it had not been for these outside leaders, the House Democrats would have split so badly on the bill that the splendidly propagandized Garner leadership would have been vastly damaged and the carefully built-up prestige of the Speaker considerably diminished. It is no secret here that Mr. Garner was for a few days in a great state of perturbation, not to say dismay. There was a good deal of scurrying around and long-distance telephoning and conferring. The Raskob organization went into action to support the bill and two or three of the overlords of the party from New York rushed down to Washington.

At this writing, it is impossible to say whether the bill will be passed. The revolt against it has proved unexpectedly vigorous and intelligent—so much so that the sponsors of the measure have been thrown into a panic. The alternative to the sales tax is indicated by the proposal for new and drastically increased income taxes in the higher brackets. The whole business, however, is a complete

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the Democratic party, as it is at present constituted, is in no way different from the Republican party; both are dominated and controlled by the same big financial influences in New York. Here we have Hoover, Mills and Snell on the Republican side, supporting the Democratic tax plan just as energetically as Raskob, Garner and Joe Robinson. Of course they are. It suits both parties. There is no real division between them, and the battles they wage are on personalities rather than principles or policies.

One interesting development of the last few days was the recalcitrancy of Leader Jim Watson in the Senate. It seems that Leader Jim, who comes up for reëlection in Indiana this fall and is in no enviable position out there, has been hearing from home on the sales tax. There is emphatic opposition to the bill in Indiana; it is unpopular out there with labor leaders and others. Hence, Jim incautiously intimated that he was by no means certain he could conscientiously bring himself to vote for the sales tax when it reached the Senate. When this report spread, they descended on Jim from all directions. They pressed, and are pressing, him pretty hard. It is said that some of the pressure in his case, too came from New York friends. There is as yet no reliable information as to how Jim will vote. Advance information about the way Jim votes is never reliable. Probably the administration will be able to convince him of the unwisdom of irregularity upon the part of the most regular of all the regulars. However, Jim listens pretty acutely to the Indiana voice, and he is not a safe bet until his name is called.

Washington. T. R. B.

Hot-Cha and Taos

Hot-Cha, by Brown and Henderson. Ziegfeld Theatre, March 8, 1932.

Night over Taos, by Maxwell Anderson. Forty-eighth Street Theatre, March 9, 1932.

BY SOME demonic pedantry no doubt, I found one verse at the back of my head all through the new "Hot-Cha" at the Ziegfeld. Tibullus, where he speaks of the wood

qua nulla humano sit via trita pede

where no path may grow trite with human feet; I seemed to have seen those prancing feet back to the birth of time; and the platitude of those chorus numbers, the jokes, the little love story of Dawrthy—some of the more Brahmin members of the cast called it Durthy—the Mexican world, seemed stupider and worse than ever. The house was full, a good many women, many more men, and chewed some sort of soothing cud to the end; though there was no way of knowing what they thought of it, had hoped for, or wanted. Such entertainment still holds its place.

The whole incident could be forgotten except for a fact, easily apparent but important in the history of the American theatre: the distance from such a review, so solidly traditional, to the newer reviews like "Of Thee I Sing" and "Face the Music." To the umbilical connection these new reviews add connections with municipal scandals, gen-

lesque, carry the matter to rattling high spirits and into comic images that remain between our ribs to confirm what has dawned in our brains. More invention and more of vital, if not stupendous, talent has already entered into these pieces than our serious drama has so far manifested. Apart from their charms and merits, good or bad as they may be, this fact about them makes, during the last two or three years, the most definitely to be watched point concerning the Broadway theatre.

Mr. Maxwell Anderson's New Mexico play, the third and last production of the Group Theatre's first season, has already closed, after a two weeks' run. The most interesting thing about the venture is the problem implied in it, though we may stop to say that the production was careful, studied, sincere and sometimes effective, and that the play had a certain poetry and dignity of mind, a certain purity of intention, not to speak of the extension into neglected and rich American material.

The story of the play happens in the forties, and is a drama between the invading American ideas and the Spanish way of life, a struggle represented chiefly in one family. We have the Montoyas, father and two sons, a girl beloved by one son but set aside for the father to marry, the betrayal of Taos by one of the sons, the honorable and tragic removal of the father from the scene; he has already stabbed the treacherous son, and at last takes poison himself. Meanwhile, the mother of these sons is long since dead, two more or less slaves survive in the house, one an old woman—well played by Miss Mary Morris—and the other a mistress whose place is taken by the young bride about to be.

Such an account of the play would be worse than nothing, except for the fact that the discussion of the Group's problem requires it.

The single room, designed by Mr. Robert Edmond Jones, was simple and gravely beautiful; the costumes were very effective, cleanly drawn, often beautiful in a fine sense above any costumes of the season. Mr. Franchot Tone, a model of painstaking make-up and studied transformation, played, within limits, well. Miss Adler as the cast-off mistress, and Mr. T. Edward Bromberg as the father, did the best playing in the company. Among the men of the Group Theatre one of the chief needs is diction; some of them speak as well as Tom, Dick and Harry in the theatre district, but none speaks good enough English for anything out of ordinary journalistic realism. Taking two of them as players who want to be really worth-while actors —a genuine compliment—I should add that Mr. Tone's voice is not yet placed—it slides, for instance, with such a word as *fall* into something which sounds like *farl,* and not rarely in longer speeches the voice is off—and that Mr. Bromberg, through an uncertain diction, lost much; for one instance, he dropped the effect in an important speech toward the last of the play by saying the word *term* as if it were *terim* with the *r* left out, or as if it were *tuhim.* Such a pronunciation shortens and closes the word by giving two vowels instead of one and changing thus the weight of the nasal *m.* Mr. Walter Coy, faithful as he may have been to the father in the play, was even falser

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cally impossible to any serious degree of excellence on the stage. The solution of their production is to all intents and purposes hopeless. The play, for instance, is a play about another race, supposed to be speaking another language. If it is complete in itself, characters, words, motives and all, no other realities need enter in; this, of course, implies in the dramatist great power plus an ignoring of foreign matters, witness Shakespeare in "Romeo and Juliet." You then produce the play in its own quality, as much as you can. But in general the case is harder. The more idiomatic and homely the words are, the more we are reminded that it is supposed to be foreign: and if the writing is not rooted, living English, the effect is flat. How far shall Montoya, head of this Spanish family, be naturalistic, heroic or what; and, for that matter, how much does the dramatist know of the profoundly Spanish motives in such people? About the only solutions within reach in such plays as "Night over Taos" are either an extreme familiar realism, leaving the Spanish side of it out, or else a high, declamatory treatment such as Calderon might give, distinct in plane, tone, essentially unified in texture. Almost inevitably even then, on our stage, any genuine reality is unattainable, anything above a mere superior intention, an impression of the high-class amateur in art,

Taking the Group's "Night over Taos" that way, I enjoyed it. Now and then there was a fine piece of writing, like the youth and old men speech, for example, in the second act, and now and then convincing moments of acting. But my pleasure depended on my letting it go as serious amateur, though it was more sincere than would have been likely in most of our theatres, and with a very few possibilities excepted—Miss Fontanne's Elizabeth, for example—quite as professional. Two or three actors, or even one, of a tremendous genius like Bernhardt's or Grasso's, would have knocked the play about but would have raised the great clouds and elements necessary to the storm implied; which only amounts to saying that with enough power and magnetism and stage compulsion you can make a thing your own that in itself is not much of anybody's. But for the young or the average player what is to be done? He is neither himself nor the Spaniard; he is not at home or firmly placed in his attack on the role. The heroic, poetic prose, fantastically felt and at the core passionate, whether fiery or grave outwardly, leaves him confused; chiefly confused, to put it another way, between what is individual and what is type. An enormous declamatory method might sweep him along, provided he can recite. A simple speech calls for a warmth and understanding deeper inside himself; and in trying to get that warmth expressed he strays between inner emotional pressure and outward animal gravity. The great final bane for him is that, whether he decides to make his portrayal either American or Spanish, he must create for it a convincingness, make his performance a reality in itself.

The same troubles follow into the décor. That simple, noble room without a speck of triviality or trash left in it is truer to an actual Spanish house than we might think, but even at that is elevated to some extent. As to the costumes, the father may come back from a night in the snow

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is to say that in art you can do anything that you can do. But in such a fair, spotless and operatic atmosphere as this in Montoya's house, you will either need for your acting the greatest vitality, pressure and glow or else you must speak in a style as far from everyday as these clothes are from the greasy and torn.

The command of such resources, in force and vitality, in style that is right and complete whether it be simple or glamorous and superb, in expressing either peculiar racial emotions or emotions guaranteed through their universality, in the conviction that if at any point you cut through the play as a whole—the people, speech, motivations, actions, invisible life—you would find one organic character, the command, to repeat, of such resources is something that we can hope for but modestly in the theatre.

What I have said is no proof, however, that the Group's experiment was not an excellent venture for themselves at least, nor is it to deny the clean, sure management in much of the stage directing and the pains spent to get the unusually good off-stage and group effects, nor to minimize the pleasure I had in the spirit behind the whole occasion.

STARK YOUNG.

Fat Ladies

THERE has been a revival of burlesque in New York since the beginning of this theatrical season; the theatre which housed "Abie's Irish Rose" for five years is now occupied by an offshoot of the downtown Minsky troupe, which was the last home of unrefined burlesque for many years; and two or three other theatres are doing a fairly prosperous business with the rough humor and the sexual dances which once used to captivate the entire country. A entertaining book has been written on the subject ("Burleycue," by Bernard Sobel) and the floor show of one night club sets, for purposes of publicity, a minimum weight of two hundred pounds for its entertainers. Yet burlesque is dead, like its opposite number, the minstrel show.

The great names of burlesque, Lydia Thompson, the Black Crook, Little Egypt, Rose Sydell and her London Belles, the Beef Trust and the Sporting Widows, are all forty years old; they continue to be remembered because burlesque seems to have little capacity to develop and change. It began with some suggestion of travesty, but in the late sixties the leg show entered and the idea that a burlesque should be a burlesque *of* something disappeared, to be rediscovered by Weber and Fields in shows which were much too refined properly to be called burlesque. For some fifty years the prosperity of burlesque came from the display of the female figure provocatively dressed or undressed; yet the single merit of that form of entertainment was in its comedy. The comedians, if they were very good, inevitably gravitated to the more elaborate uptown revues and musical shows, and gradually the producers of these shows began to outstrip the more vulgar burlesquers. In the meantime, burlesque had become a great business, with huge "wheels," or chains of theatres, and, like most great business, had yielded to moral pressure.

patron of regular shows, as well as the esthete, found the true spirit of burlesque only far down on Second Avenue or way up in Harlem, at the old Howard in Boston, and in a few isolated and more or less independent theatres.

It is clear from Mr. Sobel's somewhat patchy but informative history that the big blondes in tights and flounces were shocking to a highly proper age. The intention to shock is still visible and accounts for the appalling monotony of most burlesque shows. To borrowed and overpopularized music, a chorus comes on, dances badly on the stage, comes out on the runway and sheds a few clothes and retires. Then the star appears and goes through an unvarying routine. She sings one chorus while fiddling with part of her costume, and takes it off just as she disappears, so that she can return on the applause, sing another chorus and take off the succeeding flimsy bit, until at the fifth repetition it is clear that if she drops whatever she is holding she will be nude; at this point comes the only variation in the technique, because the star disappears into the wings and only the lingerie is flicked before the eyes of the spectators. This goes on six or eight times and constitutes the important part of the entire entertainment. It is extraordinarily dull, but once the form is established the variations can be amusing. I remember one personable young woman who used a double sheet of newspaper, tearing it column by column for each exit, while the men in the audience shouted requests for her to get a tabloid; and another one whose final protection was a series of stop, go and detour signs in obvious places. The chorus, like the principals, has only one function, which may be described as shooting from the hip, a development of the cooch dance, which is no doubt provocative the first hundred times. The burlesque show is still in the age of the "feelthy pictures" of the Paris boulevards, a "cultural lag" behind the dirty movies to which guides in every metropolis can take tourists, and which have more recently been used for private entertainment.

Why, then, do the esthetes rage at the disappearance of this form? The reason they often give is not the best one: that the fleshliness is frank, that the lewdness is explicit, so that there can be no implications. The burlesque show pretends to no decency. The legitimate revues were usually dull when they were decent and inclined to the nasty leer and the too-knowing wink when they only pretended to be decent. The burlesque show before the days when homosexuality became a topic for comedy was gross and vulgar and put women by the hundreds of pounds on the stage for the excitement of the appetites of chiefly drunken men. It was a natural interlude in a night of drunkenness or a preparation for a sexual debauch; it may even have taken the place of the latter, offering not exactly a catharsis of the emotions of pity and terror, but something roughly equivalent. It was dirty and offered a problem for the modern psychologists, because one could hardly say that its patrons were inhibited and needed the consolations of obscenity.

For those who could take obscenity or leave it alone, the real virtue of the burlesque show lay in its comedy. If burlesque did not originate, it certainly kept alive, comic types in the best farcical tradition. The stage Jew, the stage Irishman, the stage "Dutchman," the stage tramp, soubrette, the fat dowager, are all definite characters going back through Molière to the Italian comedy and going forward through farce to the pages of The New Yorker. The verbal humor of all of these was always trivial; their real humor lay in costume, make-up and gesture. They were so grotesque that they could go into foul sexual comedy without being offensive, since the proportions established by their gait and appearance, their torn voices, the idiotic stupidity or guile, were so inhuman and extravagant.

Comedy is the Byronic

> Clear, nice
> Cool squirt of water o'er the bust,
> The right thing to extinguish lust,

and the dosage of comedy in these lustful shows had to be worked out with extreme care. If the comedians were too funny, the great satisfaction of the whole enterprise was jeopardized. That is why the familiar types always recur; the audience roughly knows the jokes and laughter is an easy and fleeting release from the sexual tension. Anything novel might disturb the mind too seriously. That is perhaps why so little of the comedy is remembered. In the burlesque shows which were approaching revues, the emphasis on women was reduced and the level of comedy rose, so that you could get Clark and McCullough's lion scene and the magnificent inventions of James Barton; but out of the rougher type I can only remember a single scene which occurred in a wild burlesque of Antony and Cleopatra. It was played with dozens of variations at the old National Winter Garden. It was howlingly funny and the actions of one of the characters when "he died like a dog" are the only instance in my experience, in burlesque or any other form of entertainment, when the notably obscene was notably comic.

GILBERT SELDES.

CORRESPONDENCE

Intellectual Freedom in Russia

SIR: Our friend Mr. Benjamin Ginzburg closes his article, "Science Under Communism" (The New Republic, January 6):

> . . . As regards philosophy . . . the balance of alternatives seems to be this: In Russia the social organization of economic life . . . is actually being realized, but it is being realized at the price of intellectual freedom which the philosopher has regarded as the only end that makes socialism worth while. Elsewhere there is intellectual freedom, but it is without its roots in social reality and without power to lead to action.

Mr. Ginzburg is in too big a hurry to see intellectual freedom realized in Russia. The social organization of economic life, which he believes feeds the roots of intellectual freedom, has only just begun. Given time enough to become fertile, communism should rear the largest and most flowery tree of intellectual freedom grown on this planet to date. When the weeding of the garden is finished the tree will be attended.

As for intellectual freedom elsewhere, in case it escapes a blight and blooms for a while, it is unrecognized by masses who are thinking about bread . . . or reparations.

Seattle, Wash. G. LEO HOLCOMB.

SIR: I am not so much in a hurry to see intellectual freedom realized in Russia as I am afraid that the present set-up will prevent an evolution in the direction of freedom. I should be pleased to see history refute my fears, but I feel it necessary to sound a warning on the basis of pres[illegible]

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thought altogether rather than attempt to dictate the course of ideas along preconceived lines.

Long Island City, N. Y. BENJAMIN GINZBURG.

Postponement of the Caribbean Conference

SIR: Since the idea of the Conference was first projected, the internal situation in a large number of the countries of the Caribbean has become so complicated and acute as to make impossible at this time the attendance of a delegation which would make the Conference worth while.

The so-called Communist uprisings in Salvador have resulted in a state of nervous tension throughout a large part of Central America. Further, the recent unfortunate revolutionary disturbance here in Costa Rica has so muddied our local waters that our customary public calm will not be restored for some time. We are unexpectedly and unavoidably prevented from offering a situation where the important questions on the conference agenda could be discussed with frankness and freedom.

It is with the deepest regret that we have decided to postpone the conference date. Meanwhile, however, we shall continue the work of factual preparation, and when conditions permit fixing a future date, shall advise you.

JOAQUÍN GARCÍA MONGE.

San José, Costa Rica.

Mr. Herndon Evans Denies All

SIR: I request permission to reply to two vicious and false stories published in The New Republic under dates of February 24 and March 2. I know that this will not be granted, for, from the tone of the articles, you are interested only in one side of the matter and it is your desire to distort that side. However biased you may be, you must admit there are two sides.

On February 10, Waldo Frank wired the mayor of Pineville that a committee of writers was coming to distribute food to the starving miners. Mayor Brooks wired back that there were no starving miners in Pineville and refused permission to hold a mass meeting. The committee came on and the trucks were directed by the officers outside the city limits.

This committee stated that it was "not connected with any organization," yet it was led here by Doris Parks, head of the Communist publicity work and an admitted Communist. Miss Parks made speeches here in violation of the criminal-syndicalism laws, urging the miners to fight the law and the coal operators and telling them that they would not be given food unless they went on strike and the women went on the picket lines. Charles R. Walker, who came with Theodore Dreiser, and Mrs. Walker, directed operations of this committee from Knoxville. Harold Hickerson, another member of the party, also spoke to the miners and urged them to fight. The entire city was in a turmoil as a result of the radical speeches and the citizens decided that the sooner the committee left, the better it would be for them and the city.

This committee did not come to give out food, but to get publicity. Why did all "press releases" sent by L. Oak, Communist publicity director, contain the books written by the members of the committee? Why did the committee bring milk in tin containers and issue it in paper ice-cream cartons? Why was it necessary to take moving pictures of this act? There was no sincerity in the visit of these writers and you know it.

As chairman of the Red Cross, I personally invited the committee to visit our headquarters, where we have on file 1,300 cases, complete family records, giving names, ages and all other information about those in need. The committee declined to come, promised to look over the records "sometime" and rushed out to distribute the milk before it was too late to get good moving pictures of the humanitarian work. They were not interested in a constructive piece of relief work; they wanted lots of fanfare, moving pictures, front pages, and they did not hesitate to exploit human misery to get it.

In an editorial comment you state that I walked up to Taub and struck him. This statement is a contemptible lie, regardless of the statements made by members of the party of writers.

I was at least one hundred feet from the men when they were fighting and I did not see them until it was over and they came out in front of the lights to examine their wounds. I asked ten or twelve witnesses what had happened and all said the men fought one another. I heard one man say: "He's hitting a woman," and another cry out: "He hit his buddy." Another said: "They're fighting each other so they can go back and say we beat them up." This was the tone of every remark and a careful investigation failed to disclose one witness who had any other opinion as to what happened. Investigations since then have failed to disclose a witness who thought or saw otherwise.

I returned to Pineville and called the newspapers I represented and told them exactly what happened as related to me by witnesses. Other correspondents who talked to witnesses sent the same stories, or similar ones. Taub or Frank made no statement at the scene of the deportation. If they concocted any other statement after leaving, I know nothing about it. The events were reported exactly as they transpired and any reporter would have covered the case exactly as I did.

I was not a member of the party, but went solely as a correspondent. There were no writers or hangers-on of that party in the car I went in. The men were not taken across the state line. It is my opinion, in the light of developments and after reading some of the false statements issued by the writers, that the men really fought one another, regardless of any statements that they may have issued to the contrary. I feel that any impartial investigator will arrive at the same conclusion after interviewing the fifty or sixty men who went with the party to the state line.

I also am of the opinion, after studying the matter and determining what Pineville has had to go through during the last six months at the hands of Dreisers, Franks, Taubs and others seeking publicity and Communistic advancement, that any impartial investigator will decide that the citizenship of Pineville has exercised great self-restraint in just taking these outside busybodies to the state line.

The coal fields welcome sincere offers of help. We do not think band-wagon methods of charity distribution, accompanied by demands for this, that and the other, will solve our problem. Our own people are working day and night to remedy conditions and they welcome constructive criticism. The one thing they resent above all others is intrusion by those who exploit human misery to further personal ambitions or to stimulate relief returns to agencies that do not smack of Americanism.

Pineville, Ky. HERNDON J. EVANS.

SIR: I fear it must be literally said of Mr. Herndon Evans that "there is no truth in him." Charity might plead that he had been misled by his fellow townsmen into accepting the preposterous tale that Allen Taub and I "beat each other up" on that dark Kentucky midnight. But how believe this, when Mr. Evans can literally quote the words by which the thugs (taking advantage of the dark) sought to excuse themselves immediately after the assault? And what can charity say about the other lies of which Mr. Evans is directly guilty? Did he, for instance, not hear himself make that little speech (after the auto headlights had been switched on) to Allen Taub about constitutional law? When, on our arrival in Pineville, he offered to show us the Red Cross records and I answered, "We want to see them: we are here to learn both sides," did he understand my emphatic acceptance as a refusal? And could he possibly, from beginning to end, have witnessed—*without knowing*—the foul means by which we were prevented from hearing and helping the miners who, scattered through the mountains, had come to Pineville (their county seat) peacefully to meet us?

There can be no detailed answer to the falsehoods that have issued like a smokescreen from Kentucky in order to conceal from the world the spectacle of starving children, half-naked mothers and miners terrorized by gunmen. Such lying is pathological. It is part of the pathology of guilt. The class of men whom Mr. Herndon Evans represents would not resort to such desperate means to hide the truth of their behavior from the world were

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Equity for Americans

Tragic America, by Theodore Dreiser. New York: Liveright, Inc. 435 pages. $2.

WHEN the writers' committee recently went to Pineville, Kentucky, and attempted to give out some food to the striking miners, they found the leading citizens of the community still snarling over the visit of the Dreiser committee. At their first interview with the mayor of Pineville, Mr. Cleon Calvert, the able and avid attorney for the Straight Creek Coal Company, who sat as it were at the mayor's right hand, suddenly delivered himself apropos of nothing of the following statement: "Mr. Dreiser is very fond of tragedy"—in a tone which contemptuously implied that talking about tragedy was affectation—"he wrote 'An American Tragedy' and now he's written another book called 'Tragic America'—and he makes the assertion there that Morgan, Insull, Mellon and Ford have interests in Harlan County." And Mr. Calvert went on to point out that this statement was extremely inaccurate. Some of these interests were not in Harlan but in Knox County; some had ceased to exist, etc.

Now what Dreiser wrote in his book was this: "In Harlan County, Kentucky, the big Morgan, Insull, Ford, Mellon, etc., interests are grinding the coal miners to uncivilized living conditions. Corporation police have perpetrated lawless terror upon strikers, and denied them privileges guaranteed by Constitution and state laws." Mr. Calvert did not attempt to take up the question of the uncivilized living conditions of the miners or the denial of their constitutional rights. But Dreiser's slip about Harlan County had put him in a position to do something to discredit him. And Dreiser, in allowing it to occur, had exposed himself to the enemy. Stuart Chase, in reviewing "Tragic America," complained that there were other errors. If there are, it is a pity, and Dreiser should have them corrected. Anyone who takes up such a radical position as he does in his new book should be proof against attacks on grounds of accuracy on the part of the people he is sure to antagonize.

For such people will always try to make inaccuracies look like errors of fact. The fact is that the coal miners in Kentucky—and pretty much everywhere else in the United States—do live under uncivilized conditions and are denied their constitutional rights. And Dreiser does, in spite of his inaccuracies, succeed in getting over the basic truth about America—just as in spite of his inept and woolly writing he succeeds in being eloquent about it.

By all the rules of rhetoric and composition, "Tragic America" ought to be entirely ineffective. Never has Dreiser's prose seemed more slipshod, never have his sentences trailed and been blurred by more "to say the leasts," "as a matter of facts" and "as I see its." When there is a necessity for hitting the nail on the head, Dreiser usually manages to drive it in cockeyed: "The average individual today is really tortured; he is so numerous, so meaningless, so wholly confused and defeated. . . . More, this wildly individualistic, and hence wildly capitalistic, tension renders life at once so dull and insecure." And when he wants to bring something home to us with especial force, he is likely to produce an anticlimax: "In fact, as early as the middle of the last century, Lawrence Stone and Company, of Boston and New York, in order to have the duties on woolen and dye products lowered, disbursed bribes amounting to $87,000. Yet so widely was this type of thing mercial class, that our history as a nation is most disagreeably colored thereby. . . . How's that for an honest, kind and true country of presumably democratic and yet wholly—as it would appear—individualistic and better still, corporate, and better still, imperial, or in other words, financially tyrannical leanings? How?"

Yet in spite of Dreiser's curious wavering between a slightly pompous literary tone and a tone of extremely informal conversation—"Why, by God," he exclaims at one point, "they don't even give them a decent city government!"—his way of expressing himself never gets between us and what he wants to say. The style is always collapsing; but the man behind it remains sound. His prose has a long and steady rhythm which continues to convey his feelings and ideas even when the words don't quite make sense; and his very absurdities have the unmistakably idiosyncratic character of a genuine literary personality. And so "Tragic America," for all its crudenesses, gives a better picture of the present crisis than neater and more closely reasoned books.

Such books have a way of reducing life to statistical tables or abstract generalizations. But "Tragic America" has the imaginative scope and insight which have made Dreiser so remarkable a novelist. Dreiser talks always in terms of farmers and bankers, textile workers and white-collar workers, miners and millionaires; and—where he is particularly good—presents trusts and companies and banking operations as blind and uncouth organisms with a kind of life of their own which expand and contract, galvanize and kill, and fight each other on international arenas.

Taking up in successive chapters industry, the banks, the railways, the government, the Supreme Court, labor, the police, the church, organized charity and crime, he shows that the American people and their government are now at the mercy of the great trusts and banking houses, which are controlled by a very few rich persons. Not only have the farmers and the working class been broken for the capitalist's profit but they have been prevented by gag law and injunction, by club and gun and jail and gallows from protesting, and the time has come for the dispossessed people to turn and break the capitalists.

Here is Dreiser's conclusion: "Yet what can alleviate this corporate grip upon America? In this book, I have shown the uselessness of reform under the present methods of production and private property. Therefore, as I see it, nothing but a fundamental change in the whole system can do it. The present foundation is crumbling; the weakness is basic—absolutely at bottom and cannot be patched up or repaired. Hence, I now ask, how is it possible to change the foundation of the American economic structure? I would answer *for the masses to build themselves new institutions.* For under our present methods the working class is being destroyed—it is dying from insufferable conditions. This class must be joined by farmers and the entire middle class whom the financial barons have bled and defrauded. The cultural influences of the middle class with frequently slightly more leisure, must join up with the working class to whom they are far closer than they realize, and bolster it up.

"For indeed, the sacredness of private property is an illusion, as shown by change and death. Hence and instead, the proposed new government must have the power to confiscate and turn into state property all of the basic industries: coal, lumber, food, steel, etc., as well as the means of transportation. Some might think that those owning stock in these corporations might be paid for their

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take pot luck with the rest of us, fall in with the necessary changes in the spirit of our early pioneers and make a new and better scene here and now. Too long have they been the beneficiaries of inequity, and must learn, however grimly, that that is true. Let them forget the past. It has been a fine dream for the few, but an evil one for the many, and must give way. Besides, what have they to fear? The fate and the life and the living and working conditions of every other man—improved as equity would improve them. And is that so bad? Only a coward or a parasite would say so. Personally, I welcome the change."

He proposes "an executive power for the American working masses not unlike the Communist Central Committee in Moscow, but composed of American men and women . . . who have made a thorough study of the social and economic ills that today engulf America."

"Tragic America" is thus a significant book which marks a definite new departure in the American intellectual world. Dreiser is the first American writer outside the Communist camp itself to come out flatly for Communism for America; and his book is a pioneering effort in what has now become the supremely important task of selling the Americans the idea of Communism. This means for one thing translating the Communist ideology, colored at present so largely by Russia, into terms of American life and substituting for the jargon of the official Communist propaganda in America a language which Americans can understand. Dreiser, in "Tragic America," has made a first brave stab at this. He has, for example, tried to take off the curse attached for the American mind to the word "Communism" by talking about Communism as "equity." Well, we shall probably in the long run have to call it Communism just the same. But it will be a Communism which is less preoccupied with echoing and aping Moscow than American Communism seems to be. It will have back of it the immediate conviction of such unrussianizable Americans as Dreiser and consequently a technique more appropriate for persuading the American mind.

EDMUND WILSON.

Allen Tate's New Poems

Poems: 1928-1931, by Allen Tate. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 52 pages. $2.

ALLEN TATE was, in his early twenties, a member of the Fugitive group: poets of varying ages who, from 1922 to 1925, published a magazine of verse and indulged in mutual criticism and forbearance in Nashville, Tennessee. The Fugitives' program was never stated boldly; they stood, so far as one could see from their own work and the work of contributors admitted to print under their auspices, for a return to formalism in poetic expression, as opposed to the Imagism whose program crystallized before the War and disintegrated thereafter. *Vers libre* was banished into outer darkness. A vaguely philosophic and disturbed tone disguised much expression that was Romantic, much that derived straight from Eliot, or from the Symbolists through Eliot, and very little pure form or formal feeling.

Philosophic ambition, brilliant powers of adaptation and the dignity peculiar to the young exceeded, in the case of several members of the group, their natural equipment for poetic expression. Such a group, isolated, but with a parochial pride and a measure of intellectual discretion, a real part of a poet's gear, grows hardily in such an air; virtuosity and intellectual sleight-of-hand are likely to spring up, where intimations of true style and genuine apperception should be given room.

Allen Tate's first book, "Mr. Pope and Other Poems," exhibited, in its poorer verse, the marks of its author's forcing house. "An individualistic intellectualism is the mood of the age," Mr. Tate had earlier remarked in the pages of The Fugitive. "The modern poet has grown so astute that he will be happy only in the obscure bypaths of his own perceptive processes. It is the age of the sophist." That the poet and the sophist may be one and the same person is the implicit misapprehension here. Poetic processes, having no relation to logical processes as such, are curiously opposed in all ways to logic harried into specious modes. Mr. Tate, in his first volume, had not taken in this important point. He turned this way and that, thrashed about in shallow waters and deep, to the complete irritation of his reader and, it must have been, of himself. For under this perverse show, a genuine poetic talent existed, however lamed by its possessor's determined incoherence—a talent grave and earnest in tone, classic in feeling, tempered in degree. The "Ode to the Confederate Dead," "Mr. Pope," "Obituary" and "Epistle" announced its presence. These poems have authority and approach a definite style.

Many poems in the new volume bear scars from Mr. Tate's long continued and determined attack on his own poetic equipment. He is not yet quite certain what he wants to do or, what is more important, what his talent allows him to do. The field of possible effects has narrowed around him, because of his long struggle against "the lyric moment, and its tears"—also, one must conclude, because of an impatient apprenticeship. Now that Mr. Tate has settled down to his career in verse, he often fails because he patently does not know how to bring the matter in hand to its most effective conclusion. His vocabulary is sometimes sterile; images and even image-phrases are repeated in more than one poem (the looking-glass image in "The Paradigm" and "The Last Days of Alice"). His emotional effects (the invocation in the last stanza of the "Alice" poem, for example) many times seem misplaced, since the transition from the mode of speculation to that of feeling presents no problem to him, as it should. The weak dying-out of meaning as well as of phrase which we encounter in the "Ode to Fear," after the first stanzas' excellences, point to some defect, or some lack of training, in ear or imagination:

> You are the surety to immortal life
> God's hatred of the universal stain
> The heritage, O fear, of ancient strife
> Compounded with the tissue of the vein,
>
> And I when all is said have seen your form
> Most agile, and most treacherous to the world
> When on a child's long day a dry storm
> Burst on the cedars by the sunlight hurled.

No end is served by the lame cadence of the penultimate, or the hanging construction of the ultimate line. No support is given, exactly where support is needed.

The successful poems, on the other hand, have a solidity, and even, in some cases, a kind of magnificence which bears out the sanity of the poet's shifted line of attack. In them he has deliberately relinquished that preciosity for which

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of his early excursions, he gave evidence of having recognized as his own. In "Emblems," "Message from Abroad" and "The Oath," he has rejected the spurious excitement of piled-up and complicated images. These poems state simply, with coolness and severity, deep and homely pride in countryside and kin. "Sonnets of the Blood," although in some ways impressive, do not come through to complete success because Tate cannot decide between his early and later methods; he dodges the issue in form and emotion so that both appear disoriented and provisional. But the wind is in the right quarter.

"Because," says Mr. Tate in the foreword to "Poems: 1928-1931," "the poem called 'Ignis Fatuus' was the epilogue to a previous book called 'Mr. Pope and Other Poems,' it is included in this volume as the first poem, or prologue. The books of a poet are finally one book; the author is writing to that end." This is commendable seriousness. The poet capable of it cannot remain for long even slightly self-confounded. LOUISE BOGAN.

Seventy American Years

The United States Since 1865, by Louis M. Hacker and Benjamin B. Kendrick, with a foreword by Dixon Ryan Fox. New York: F. S. Crofts and Company. 775 pages, illustrated. $5.

THIS IS a general history of the United States since the close of the Civil War. Such being the plan, the book of necessity deals primarily with the staples of the old story, but the very titles of the contents reveal an independent spirit and outlook. It is ominously divided into two parts: "the humbling of the farmers," and "the emergence of imperial America." Under these broad interpretations of what has happened in the past seventy years, events, persons, parties and movements are distributed among ten sections divided into thirty-five chapters. The volume opens with reconstruction. Then follow the sad decade of Grant and his immediate successors, the rounding out of the continent, the process of industrialization, agrarian discontent, the imperialist outburst which accomplished the short and glorious war, the reformist era of Roosevelt and Wilson, the World War, the golden twenties, the crash and its challenge. Two special chapters cover American life, letters and art—one for the gilded age and another for the machine age.

Everywhere within this framework are evidences of scholarly precision. One example will suffice. In discussing Roosevelt's Venezuelan affray of 1902, the authors say, "largely at the prompting of Great Britain, the British, Germans and Italians decided to engage in a demonstration against Venezuela." That statement cuts into tradition, and the sentence, "largely at the prompting of Great Britain," has a sheaf of heavy documents behind it. The high and mighty role which Roosevelt later imagined, or constructed out of figments, for himself is calmly disposed of by a mere footnote to the effect that Roosevelt afterward published a letter on an alleged ultimatum to Germany and that no evidence has been discovered to substantiate his claim. This is the quintessence of scholarly caution and understatement. The authors might have added that evidence has been unearthed to indicate that Roosevelt made his belligerent tale out of—perhaps the shreds of the old hat which he threw into the ring for Wilson and Taft to trample during the Armageddon at- fair of 1912.

On the whole, the significance of this book lies not in the new and startling facts brought to light by the historical spade, but in the temper and slant revealed by it. It is a book with few façades and doctrinal illusions. It goes behind the scenes and it refuses to accept statements as they appear laid out for posterity in the tomb of family biographies. It betrays, not obtrusively, a genial humor, tinged with a soft and appropriate irony. Evidently the new generation is here. The political narrative is buttressed by economics. The solemn and pompous deceptions of "objective" history are studiously avoided. It is recognized that the people of the United States have not lived by steel and cotton statistics alone but have had joys, appreciations, ideas and amusements besides. Yet artistic rhapsody nowhere obtrudes itself. Our authors point out very calmly that masses of the American people in the high noon of Coolidge prosperity—the small farmers, sharecroppers, clerks, floor-walkers and industrial workers—"enjoyed" a standard of life too cruel to allow them room "for pondering on the timelessness of a Chinese vase." If these authors are right, and there is reason to believe that they are, then the age of the grand historians has passed, and the scene is now to be viewed from another angle than that of the high table at the banquet.

CHARLES A. BEARD.

Bridge Builders

The Roeblings: A Century of Engineers, Bridge Builders and Industrialists, by Hamilton Schuyler. Princeton University Press. 425 pages. $5.

THIS IS one of those documents which, lacking any interpretative literary value, still fill a definite place as primary source material. Mr. Schuyler has apparently known the Roebling family for a long time and, without any pretext of dramatizing his story or relating it to the American life in general, he presents a large number of facts, many of them interesting. Such criticism as Mr. Schuyler permits himself is that of an intimate friend of the family—while the praise is the familiar, rather impersonal variety reserved for obvious and well deserved American success.

The side of the Roeblings which is typical of the history of countless solid German-American families is well documented. Here is the story of the clever young German engineer of liberal inclinations who, seeing no future in Europe, emigrated in 1831 and settled near Pittsburgh (in a village which had to be colonized entirely by frugal Germans, since no other people would have been satisfied with the small and neighborly allotments). Working on the canals a short time later, young Roebling found that the hemp rope then used for cross-hauls was unsatisfactory and set about making wire rope in his own back field. As simple as that. The removal to Trenton and the growth of the factory to its present size and importance are normal and logical matters.

But the Roeblings as engineers have set the pace for their industry. In 1844, John Roebling built the first wire-cable suspension aqueduct, and in 1846 his first suspension bridge was hung over the Monongahela at Pittsburgh. More aqueducts, then the Niagara Falls Bridge in 1852, the Pittsburgh-Allegheny Bridge in 1860, the Covington-Cincinnati Bridge in 1867 and, finally, the projection of the Brooklyn Bridge in the same year, bring the

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builder's mantle fell on his three able and thoroughly disciplined sons, and their accomplishments, their hobbies and their "personalities" occupy the remainder of the book, the real hero of which is John A. Roebling's Sons Company.

This is perhaps as it should be, if John and Washington Roebling were no more than typical clever engineers and astute industrialists—if, that is, the excellence of the Brooklyn Bridge was sheer accident which might have befallen any good builder. But it is just possible that there is something more deeply symptomatic in their joint career than any simple success story can bring to light—and that the history of the handsome Roeblings might prove more symbolic than typical.

For one thing, John Roebling was an extremely accomplished and well educated young man, the flower, and not merely the adventurous offshoot, of old-world culture. He was a musician and a philosopher—had been, in fact, a favorite pupil of Hegel's. There was once a thick manuscript volume called "Roebling's Theory of the Universe," which interested Mr. Schuyler so little that he did not even ascertain whether or not it had been destroyed. Coming to America, Roebling kept a minute diary of his journey, including thoughts on sociology, politics and natural history.

The effect of pioneering on a man of this type—he made, apparently, no contacts in the cultural centers of the time and was a hard father and a preoccupied, impersonal husband—and through him on his brilliant son, Washington, is a matter toward which much of Mr. Schuyler's material points, but which receives no share of the author's attention. The fact that Washington suffered an attack of caisson disease at the age of thirty-five from overwork on Brooklyn Bridge does not in any degree explain his complete retirement after the bridge was finished, to spend the remaining forty-three years of his life collecting minerals in taciturn seclusion.

The fact that all of them, and particularly the two most gifted members of the family, turned sourly cynical well before middle age and, in evident disgruntlement, avoided every sort of society except that of the factory and the immediate family, would seem to be of no minor significance in the real history of the successful Roeblings.

C. K. Bauer.

The End of a Tradition

The Devil Is an English Gentleman, by John Cournos. New York: Farrar and Rinehart. 2 vols. $3.75.

HENRY JAMES spoke of certain passages in D'Annunzio's novels as suffering by having "no common kindness . . . no common consistency with other relations," and the phrase is applicable to much of the fiction of our time, if the "other relations" are thought of as contemporary social and intellectual movements. Mr. Cournos' two-volume study of three generations of an English family might be taken as an example. It is frankly an old-fashioned performance. The author has emphasized his resistance to technical innovations in the novel by unabashed asides to the reader, by elaborate chapter headings, by a general refusal to have any dealings with literary artifice. "The Devil Is an English Gentleman" is a chronicle, a long and romantic novel of three generations of the Thorleys of Ravenswood. Yet it is no mere repetition between generations: the Thorleys are unconcerned with property and at odds with tradition, though they occasionally feel a modest nostalgia for the passing of the ancestral home, and a distaste for the civilization that destroys it. The quarrel between selflessness and selfishness, between illusion and reality, is the true battleground of the novel, and the characters are continually embroiled in tense quarrels, not with each other or with society, but with themselves.

Romantic love serves as the starting point of these quarrels, from the time William Thorley brings his Russian bride to Ravenswood. The terms of the conflict change; in one generation it is described as racial, in the next religious, and in the third economic. But whatever the terms, it is the triumphs and disappointments of individuals that remain most important; the impact of the imaginative conception of evolution is insignificant compared with one result of it, Henry Thorley's trial marriage; Richard Thorley's interest in Communism is important only because it leads him to a love affair with the Communist leader's wife, and then to marriage with his widow. Sex is the central matter, as truly as in the novels of D. H. Lawrence; and the sexual difficulties of the characters are treated as though they existed apart from social problems in a wider sense, apart from the individual's attitude toward life, and apart from the social structure of the times.

And in the end all the passion seems wasted in a battle with phantoms, and we are left wondering why the agitations that move the Thorleys are so important. A kind of inner meaninglessness seems to drain them of their strength, and a lack of "common consistency with other relations" leaves their adventures the mere actions of some eccentric Englishmen. With its romantic individualism and the deliberate antiquity of its method, "The Devil Is an English Gentleman" might well serve as the final volume in a literary tradition that has long outlived its appeal.

Robert Cantwell.

Book Notes

Americana

DEVIL'S DITTIES, by Jean Thomas. *Chicago: W. Wilbur Hatfield. 180 pages, illustrated. $2.50.*

A great wealth of new and fascinating material is offered here—songs, notes on the Kentucky singers who first made them known to Miss Thomas, airs and accompaniments which closely follow the native habit of singing with abrupt changes of key, and a group of sketches that dramatize this rich inheritance against present-day mountain life. The sketches carry an effect of veracity lacking in much of the rather pretty fiction now current about these people. The songs show an extraordinary variety. Heretofore most collectors have been concerned with the remaining English and Scottish ballads. While not neglecting these, Miss Thomas has included many others, notably a group whose native origin is plain, such as the fine "Rowan County Troubles" and "Cumberland Gap." Few books concerning our native lore have offered so many-sided a contribution.

THE SAGINAW PAUL BUNYAN, by James Stevens. *New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 261 pages. $2.50.*

"Ain't the way I heern it," is the frequent remark of an old-timer as a Paul Bunyan story is ended; then a new one begins. But nobody ever heard it Mr. Stevens' way—not among lumberjacks. Few of them would care to admit that Paul's nose was "caressed and exhilarated by mingled perfumes." As in his earlier

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style. Worst of all he has adulterated the humor. In the lumber camps this is quietly slipped over. Mr. Stevens backs and fills and makes conspicuous passes before hurling jokes.

SINGING COWBOY: A Book of Western Songs, collected and edited by Margaret Larkin. *New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 196 pages. $3.50.*

Probably no collection of cowboy songs will supersede Lomax's, but there are new songs and new versions in this clearly printed volume, and the inclusion of airs and accompaniments greatly enhances its value. "Singing Cowboy" incites singing. One wishes that Miss Larkin might have enlarged the prefatory notes from the wealth of her experience in the cow country. Those she offers are full of color.

Biography

CARLYLE, by Emery Neff. *New York: W. W. Norton and Company. 282 pages. $3.*

Here is an unusually keen, spirited and scholarly biography, probably the best single-volume life of Carlyle yet to appear. The biographer is sympathetic toward his subject, but the approach is critical and historical. Carlyle's background, his works, influence and ideas, his position in the intellectual life of his times, are stressed, his personal life being relegated to its proper place in the general perspective. Admirers of Jane Welsh may feel that he has done her scant justice. But Mr. Neff's estimate—in general the same as that which Meredith expressed—is probably the true one; Froude painted the wrong picture. Although they "snapped one another," both the Carlyles being singularly free of the Victorian vice of hypocrisy, few who knew them doubted their intense devotion to each other. Neff discusses all of Carlyle's books as they appear chronologically in the biography, and his criticism is good reading. "'Sartor Resartus' and 'Past and Present,'" he says, "mark the turning of English romanticism from the problems of the individual to the problems of society"—an acute remark, but he should have mentioned the exception of Shelley.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, by G. R. Tabouis. *New York: Whittlesey House. 410 pages, illustrated. $5.00.*

Mme. Tabouis has hardly succeeded in recreating the personality of the Babylonian emperor; all the traits of character with which she endows him—boundless lust of conquest, callous cruelty, superstitious religiosity—distinguish the whole line of Assyro-Babylonian conquerors. The real interest of the book lies in its depictions of certain phases of the ancient civilization of the Near East.

ROOSEVELT IN THE ROUGH, as told to Horace Smith by Jack Willis. *New York: Ives Washburn. 240 pages. $3.*

This book, told to an amanuensis by a hunter who introduced Roosevelt to the joys of shooting the elusive "white antelope goat," hasn't much of importance that is new in Rooseveltiana, but it does contain one hilarious chapter of value to biographers. This is the account of the Butte dinner to President Roosevelt in 1903, which, according to Jack Willis, almost ended with gun play. Roosevelt's invitation to Butte, it seems, was an incident in the copper war between the Heinze forces and the Rockefeller crowd, a struggle which was then corrupting the press and labor organizations, and capturing state politics and courts. The Heinze forces won; they got the Mayor of Butte, their man, to preside at the Roosevelt dinner; and—perhaps—the prestige of capturing the President of the United States persuaded a certain Montana judge that he was playing with the wrong gang when he gave decisions in favor of the Rockefeller copper interests. At least that is how Jack Willis recalls it all; Kermit Roosevelt thinks Mr. Willis inaccurate. But the main excellence of the story has nothing to do with truth; one likes the yarn because it is very amusing. Jack Willis, incidentally, is a likable and entertaining character in his own right.

Poetry

TO WHOM ELSE, by Robert Graves. NO TROUBLE, by Len Lye. *Deya, Mallorca, Spain: The Seizin Press. 19 and 27 pages, respectively. 25 shillings each.*

These [illegible] shillings [illegible]

to read them. Fifteen new poems by Robert Graves are worth more attention than they are likely to get in this elaborate format, for Graves has evidently learned the virtues of self-criticism and the power of selection. After breaking away from the Georgians and affecting half a dozen different experimental attitudes, he has at last entered a phase that is slowly producing poetry of sharp images and verbal distinction. At least two of the poems included here are memorable. As for the prose poems of the Len Lye volume, they can be considered only in relationship to their attractive binding and then hastily forgiven. They are, of course, largely dependent upon their promise of imaginative force and verbal technique; unfortunately the pioneer work indicated here has already been accomplished by the advance-guard little magazines such as Transition, Broom and The Little Review.

Fiction

EARLY CLOSING, by D. Wynne Willson. *New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company. $2.50.*

What happened during the year in one of the houses of an English public school is the subject of Miss Willson's first novel. It consists of several minor plots drawn loosely together and told with more charm than imagination. A few pranks and a good deal of English-novel conversation cloud over the reactions of the boys to the structure and politics of the school's life. William, the housemaster, who is continually excusing his ideals, is the most interesting and credible of the characters.

THE FORTNIGHT IN SEPTEMBER, by R. C. Sherriff. *New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company. $2.*

A London clerk, his wife and three children set out from their house in the suburbs for their annual vacation—a fortnight at the seashore. The book deals entirely with the passing of this fortnight, during which nothing happens to alter materially the fortunes of the Stevens family. The novel draws to a close as it began, almost without plot. As in "Journey's End," however, something is happening, always. Mr. Sherriff pictures the events of the fortnight in their relations to all members of the family and in the light of their lives, past and to come, until the holiday stands out distinctly for what it was to the Stevenses—the climax and one vital part of the year.

Contributors

Bernard J. Reis is a certified public accountant with a wide range of experience in bankruptcy and stock-brokerage investigations. He is the treasurer of Consumers' Research, Inc.

Oakley Johnson, a member of the English department of the College of the City of New York, is secretary of the John Reed Club in New York. At present he is working on a novel.

Gilbert Seldes, critic, novelist, translator and columnist for The New York Evening Journal, will supplement his various contributions to the fields of culture and learning by publishing this month a pamphlet called "Against Revolution."

Louise Bogan, author of two books of verse, "Body of This Death" and "Dark Summer," has contributed sketches, poetry and criticism to The New Yorker, Scribner's and other magazines.

Charles A. Beard, whose many works on politics and history need no introduction to New Republic readers, recently published "The Navy: Defense or Portent?" under the imprint of Harper and Brothers.

Catherine Bauer, who has contributed extensively to architectural magazines, is at present an associate editor of architecture for The Arts Weekly, which made its first appearance early this month.

Robert Cantwell, a contributor to "The Third American Caravan," recently published his first novel, "Laugh

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